

The Good Deposit **2 Timothy 1:3-14**
October 6th, 2013 **Pentecost 20C** **Pastor Rob Zeratsky**

<read text 2 Timothy 1:3-14>

I want to start off today by really looking at this last verse. It's so powerfully stated and yet also a bit ambiguous on its own. "**Guard the good deposit,**" Paul says (v14). But what does that mean? Let's take a look. First of all, what is a deposit exactly? Well in the sense we're going to be talking about today, one person gives another person something valuable, usually a sum of money, as a guarantee or a promise of something else to come. There's security deposits when something of value is rented, like an apartment or a bouncy castle. There's deposits made on large orders that will require a lot of time and money to produce or that will cost the provider a lot if the person who ordered changes their mind, like a caterer or a DJ. So for the person receiving the deposit, they're a kind of security against what might happen if the other person defaults. But for the person *giving* the deposit, it's basically a kind of promise. "I will do what I said I will, and I'm willing to stake this much money on that promise."

This is much like what God has done for each of us. He has given you a deposit and that deposit is a promise from him of a larger fulfillment to come. What is this amazing deposit and fulfillment? Paul describes it earlier in our section when he writes, "**[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**" (v9-10). This is the promise God makes for you. While we were trapped under a death sentence of our own earning, he came to us through his word and sacraments and made this promise. "I will rescue you," he said, "I will pay your price and I will do what is necessary to gain you access into my heaven."

We are, on our own, unfit for God's kingdom. We do not deserve anything good from him at all. We have not earned anything except death. But our Father did not want that to happen to us, so he changed things. He sent Jesus Christ to defeat death for us. He lived a perfect life to the Father for us, and he died our death for us. Through his sacrifice, the gates of heaven are opened to all who put their trust in Jesus for this forgiveness. Anyone who knows and believes that Jesus accomplished this for them is welcomed into eternal dwellings at the end of this life. Except, no one is capable of doing even that on their own. The nature we are born with can only worship itself as god. It hates the true God and wants nothing to do with him. As we are born into this world, we cannot come to God on our own. We cannot approach him, we cannot trust him, we do not want him.

So God much change our hearts for us. Through his word, through his power, he has created a new self within us. A new person who is separate and distinct from the sinful self. A self that is free from the chains of sin and most importantly a self that loves and trusts in our God in all things, including the forgiveness of sins that he promises. This new nature, this new self, that is the deposit God has made in you. A new and holy creation that is a promise of the complete holy life to come. For now, we have the new self, but we still have our old nature lurking within constantly fighting with it. Constantly trying to get us to go back to ignoring our God and indulging our self at every opportunity. And all around us we have to deal with the external influences. The world that hates God wants the sinful nature to win out in us. And the devil does his best to help both along to victory. These influences, even if they don't win out, are still a constant drain and burden on us during this life. And that's to say nothing of just the difficulties we have to deal with because we live in a world tainted with sin. Disasters strike, life changes suddenly without warning, our own bodies fail us. But the promise of God given in the deposit of your faith is that these things will not follow you forever.

And the promise of that deposit gives us the strength to carry the right attitude with us through all those trials and difficulties. Look at Paul here. He had faithfully proclaimed Christ at God's direction ever since his conversion. He had been bold for the Lord and faithful in his calling. And in return he had been run out of towns, beaten, stoned and left for dead, and now was left to sit in prison. And yet because of the confidence he had in the deposit God had given him, how does he start this section here? "**I thank God,**" (v3) he says. In fact further down he also says, "**So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner.**" (v8). "His" prisoner. Not prisoner of the Romans, prisoner of the Lord. Even in the chains of a foreign government he recognized the Lord was ultimately in control of his life and it was God who allowed him to be in the position he was. Let's be clear, God does not cause or approve of sin or evil. But God allows it in our lives and uses it to accomplish his purposes when it is necessary.

And we who have the good deposit within us are able to recognize these things as they happen to us just like when they happened to Paul. When things we have are lost, this is not a tragedy. It is God who took them away and we trust God. When our health fails, this is not a tragedy. It is God who is in charge of our days and our nights, it is only by his will that we draw each breath. We trust him. As we get older and cannot do as much as we used to, when we lose our

personal freedoms and have to rely on others more and more, this is not a tragedy. In humility we recognize that we never were as independent as we wanted to believe, but we've always been dependent on our God for everything. And we trust him to continue to provide us with everything we need, even though the way he provides them may change from time to time.

Whatever we gain or lose in this life, whatever comes or goes, we have the promise of life eternal made by the deposit of faith and the Holy Spirit within us. This gives us what we need to approach every situation here and now with the proper Godly attitude and it gives us confidence as we go forward toward that glorious end that we will all see. The deposit of faith that God has made in us is valuable beyond measure and that is why he instructs us here to guard it so carefully.

Because as I mentioned, there are forces that want this gone. Our sinful nature within us, the world around us and the devil himself want to do more than just annoy us, harm us or cause us to suffer. They want to see that deposit lost, they want to see us throw it aside and give it up and lose our promise for the future. They can never force it away from us, but they can lure us into traps that have us willingly put it aside for all the wrong reasons. They know where you are weakest and will attack there. They'll inflate your pride if they need to, or they'll intimidate you with threats. Whatever they need to do to convince you that it's best for you if you go back to being your own god and put aside this deposit that's been given to you.

Right now, that hasn't happened to you, thankfully. But that doesn't mean we can just be lax about it either. We absolutely cannot afford to lose this and so we must guard it ferociously. It is the thing that truly matters for us. And we guard it just as Paul says here, "**guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.**" (v14). The Holy Spirit is our help as we seek to preserve this treasure we've been given. Just like we were powerless to save ourselves, just like we were powerless to come to God on our own, we are equally powerless to protect this treasure within us. Only God can do that and in his mercy he does this freely, through a means available to all. The Holy Spirit works through the word of God and the sacraments of God to strengthen and secure that deposit made in us. Only by making regular use of these means is our deposit guarded.

And yet, at the same time that we want to guard this good deposit so zealously, we also are called to show it off to the world and share so that all might have it! The deposit in us makes us confident and bold not just to face the world and whatever it might throw at us, it also makes us bold to try to help the world just as we each have been helped by God. As Paul writes here, "**For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.**" (v7). It is the love that motivates us to show the world who we are in Christ, so that they can come to know the only means of salvation, the true God who died for them. It's that love that compels us to speak to those who will otherwise be condemned unless we say something. It is that love that recognizes that everyone we encounter, no matter how different or aggravating they may be to us on the outside, is a hurting soul that Christ died for, just like each of us. That literally we would be exactly the same except by the grace of God.

And it is the power of God working through us that gives us the boldness and confidence to speak. We have the truth that can save them. What do we stand to lose by speaking? Pride, honor, respect? We stand to perhaps be humiliated and have our feelings hurt in rejection? How does that compare to what they stand to lose if we do not speak? You might suffer something temporary in an effort to spare them eternal torment. The same torment again that we deserve but God has chosen to spare us. Look to the deposit within you for the courage and the strength. Let that promise of life eternal no matter what happens here and now be your strength as you face the intimidation of the world.

You have been given a good deposit as a promise of something much greater to come. The deposit itself is of great value as it allows us to live better here and now. But that deposit has its greatest value in its ultimate fulfillment that God promises through it. Someday the new life began in us now will be brought to completion in each one of us. At that time there will be no more hunger or thirst or pain. We will leave behind all the troubles and worries here completely and we will have the fullness of what is promised to us. A life of peace and joy lived with our Lord forever. You know how to bring this comfort and joy to those who don't have it yet. You have been given the good deposit. Guard it carefully. Share it freely. Amen.