

Series: Open Door

Sunday, June 12

Titus Sermon: #4: Productive Living

Scripture: Titus 3:1-15

Text: Titus 3:14 “Our people should learn to spend their time doing something useful and worthwhile.”

Theme: Our new living as Christians matches our new identity in Christ. Our inheritance determines our future, and this affects how we live now. Paul calls Christians to devote themselves to doing what is good.

Blurb: Our God is a God of second chances! We may feel stuck and long for a new start. Good news, God grants it! Our past does not define our situation, and it no longer determines our future. Come this Sunday for our final sermon on Titus. Yet for all of us, it's not the end, but because of God, it's a new beginning!

Opening Song: “Come and Find the Quiet Center”

Welcome: Pastor David

Songs: “All My Fountains”

“Song of Hope”

“Freedom Reigns”

Worship Prayer

Kids go to Kid’s Church

Grow Moment: Amelia Buschena

Ministry of Staff: Pastor David

Andrew & Amelia Buschena to Cambridge, July 1.

Gina Masterjohn presents gift

Rebecca “Becca” Stenlund as Office Coordinator

Prayer Shawl

Mission Moment: Love Offering

Offering: Love Offering slides

PP#1: Productive Living

“Our people should learn to spend their time doing something useful and worthwhile.” -Titus 3:14

Titus Chapter 3. Productive Living. Verse 14, “Our people should learn to spend their time doing something useful and worthwhile.”

PP#2: *Picture of a big mango tree, and if possible, with people sitting under it*

My mother turned 90 on Friday. Next Sunday we're going to Sioux Falls for her party. But she winters in Florida, and across from her trailer home is a huge mango tree. What is amazing to me is that unlike the citrus trees in her yard, which bear their fruit during the pleasant temperatures of winter, the mangos become ripe during the scorchingly-oppressive summer months. When I was down there a couple of years ago, I saw people gather under the mango tree, sitting in it's shade, and eating it's ripe and juicy fruit. People came from all over the court to relax and enjoy the treat.

PP#3: Jeremiah 17:7-8

7 "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in Him.

8 They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit."

That visual image is a great image for a mature Christian. In the Bible, Jeremiah 17 says that people who follow God's leading are like sturdy trees. Their roots are deep and connected to God's grace, so when the scorching heat comes—trials and hard times—they continue to flourish, and show vibrant green leaves, and even then bear fruit in the hardest times.

The image is awesome, for the fruit, you see, doesn't benefit the tree. It benefits others, strangers, passers by.

Jeremiah's message is that God's people are like this. I see this in my mother. She is like that mango across from her house. Her life is a blessing to others around her. And I want to be like her.

And this is what Paul is saying to the Christians on Crete in the third and final chapter of Titus. If you like, turn to Titus in your Bibles. It's almost the book right before Hebrews, towards the end of the Bible.

PP#4: Titus:

Gospel believe + Gospel behavior

God's Gospel goal is godliness

Productive living

Paul, the great missionary and church planter across the Roman empire, wrote this as a letter to Titus, whom he appointed as the leader of the Christians on the island of Crete.

In Titus, Paul's main message is linking Gospel belief with Gospel living. Christians do what we believe, and our belief is shaped as we behave as God intends. Gospel belief and Gospel behavior are two sides of the same Christian faith. Or, as a preacher once said so well of Titus, God's Gospel goal is godliness. Our lives have a God-given purpose. We are planned for a productive purpose. Our lives have impact. We are to grow into one of those mature and shade-giving trees.

PP#5: Outline of Titus

Greeting (1:1-4)

Titus to organize the church of Crete (1:5-16)

Appoint elders (1:5-9)

Correct false teachers (1:10-16)

How Christians are to treat one another (*internal*)
 Instructions for men, women & slaves (2:1-10)
 God's loving-kindness (2:11-15)
 How Christians are to treat others (*external*) (3:1-11)
 Closing (3:12-15)

We've been spending a few weeks on Titus so we can learn about how to live following Jesus, when we decide to go through the door that God has opened in front of us. What it looks like to live for God.

Paul gives an outline of that when he writes Titus.

He begins by saying that his purpose is to help other people grow in Christ. Then he tells Titus to organize the Christians on Crete, first by appointing elders, and then correcting false teachers.

In the second chapter, Paul explains how Christians are supposed to behave towards each other, how they are to treat each other. They do this because the loving-kindness that God had first shown them.

Then, in chapter three, Paul explains how Christians are supposed to treat others in their wider communities. Get organized. Treat each other in grace that builds unity, and that also affect the others around you. Productive living.

PP#6: Titus 3 (CEV)

3:1 Remind your people to obey the rulers and authorities and not to be rebellious. They must always be ready to do something helpful 2 and not say cruel things or argue. They should be gentle and kind to everyone. 3 We used to be stupid, disobedient, and foolish, as well as slaves of all sorts of desires and pleasures. We were evil and jealous. Everyone hated us, and we hated everyone.

Titus three, verse 1, "Remind your people to obey the rulers and authorities and not to be rebellious. They must always be ready to do something helpful and not say cruel things or argue. They should be gentle and kind to everyone. We used to be stupid, disobedient, and foolish, as well as slaves of all sorts of desires and pleasures. We were evil and jealous. Everyone hated us, and we hated everyone."

Well, Paul starts off heavy! Tell the Christians to obey the government.

Now, Paul is in prison while writing this. At least that is one of the two most plausible theories. We really don't know exactly when Paul wrote Titus. One possibility is that Paul is in a prison in Rome awaiting trial, and Paul knows he will soon be killed for his faith. The other possibility is that Paul was released from prison after three years, and was heading to Spain. But even if that is what happened, we know that he is still again captured, put in prison in Rome, and is killed. Either way, Paul is beheaded in Rome, supposedly at the same spot where Peter was killed, which supposedly is over the spot where the Vatican's St. Peter's is built.

When Paul is writing Titus, Nero is the emperor in Rome, and Nero wants all Christians dead. So, when Paul says obey the authorities, he knows what he's talking about. He has been captured multiple times, imprisoned, beaten, left for dead more than once. The government is actively seeking out Christians to kill them. Yet he still says to obey the authorities.

PP#7: *Image of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in Washington, D.C.*

Why? Why would Paul say to be submissive to such an unjust and hostile government? Because it is not about themselves. It is about their witness. Once you decide to follow Jesus, you agree to stop living for yourself and start living for others. We talked about this last Sunday. Paul's concern is living in a way that extends blessing to others. Jesus had said, "Love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you." How you treat those who treat you badly is part of your witness as a Christian. You see, Christians live differently.

Normal people lash out against an unfair government. Normal people resist and rebel. Christians, however, honor government authority, even when it is ungodly.

Not that Christians obey when their government calls them to do ungodly things. That's when Christians consciencesly, but non-violently, object. We peacefully refuse, but we still acknowledge their authority, and graciously suffer whatever punishments the government may hand down.

PP#8: Productive Living

1. Live a Changed Life (Titus 3:1-3)

"They should be gentle and kind to everyone." Titus 3:2

You see, Paul says in Romans 13, that all authority comes from God. Christians are always, as much as they are able, to obey their human leaders out of deference to God's authority given to them. This is true, even if leaders abuse that power. After all, it's not all about seeking justice for ourselves, but first, we seek to be a good witness to the authorities, hoping they will see God through us.

It's so hard to do this. Our human will screams out when we are treated unfairly. But remember, Christians aren't normal! We are gentle and kind to everyone...everyone!

Christians are good citizens. We love our country and pray for its leaders, no matter how we personally feel about them. We want to engage our wider community, not just doing good *to* them, but doing good *with* them. We look out into our wider communities and ask, "What can be done? How can we serve? How can we join and serve, with? We live as a witness *among* our community.

Those we live among should be blessed because of us. Our communities should look differently because we live here. My sister goes for a walk every day. And, as she walks, she picks up trash. She tells me it adds good exercise, bending over. And yes, it's good for the environment. But it does more than that. It blesses her community.

You know, I've started to adopt her way of thinking. Things should always be better when I'm around. When I walk, I should pick up trash. When I'm in the parking lot at Cub, I should roll the stray cart into the bin. When I walk to the doctor's office, I can pull out that dandelion in the rocks. Kinda weird, right? But remember, Christians aren't normal. What can be done? And we foster a reputation that wherever Christians live, or go, we are a blessing. We are to live consistently with the Gospel. Our behavior should describe the truth of Jesus.

And usually this takes time, especially with our neighbors. Relationships take time to build. But over time, your neighbors should start to see you as a good neighbor, someone they can trust, someone they can call on, someone they want to talk to. It's kind of like that big mango tree. It's big enough for people to sit under, and it's shade allows the green grass to grow lush.

PP#9: Titus 3 (CEV)

3:1 Remind your people to obey the rulers and authorities and not to be rebellious. They must always be ready to do something helpful 2 and not say cruel things or argue. They should be gentle and kind to everyone. 3 We used to be stupid, disobedient, and foolish, as well as

slaves of all sorts of desires and pleasures. We were evil and jealous. Everyone hated us, and we hated everyone.

Verse 3. And remember, you used to be like that. Stop being so irritated with everyone. We should have sympathy, remembering from whence we have come. “But by the grace of God, there go I.” We were like they, and if they learn of God’s grace, they can be different, too.

Have a heart. Long for their salvation. David Wallace said, “Worshiping only God gives life. All the rest will consume you.” People are struggling, seeking happiness following the lie that more stuff makes things better. But we’ve heard the gospel truth. Only Jesus satisfies! We must tell them.

Seeking money and possessions only leaves us feeling like we never have enough. Seeking beauty and sex leaves us always feeling we’re inadequate and ugly. Seeking power leaves us afraid, and seeking more. Seeking intellect and wanting to be smart leaves us feeling stupid and ignorant.

And we struggle with these, too, don’t we. Just because we know better doesn’t mean we always make good choices. So, be gracious. Treat others well.

Your life is only different because of Jesus. Don’t get self-righteous. Get gracious. Love.

PP#10: Titus 3 (CEV)

4 God our Savior showed us how good and kind He is. 5 He saved us because of His mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning. 6 God sent Jesus Christ our Savior to give us His Spirit. 7 Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life. 8 This message is certainly true.

Now, if you have your Bibles, and you mark in them, I want you to draw a box around verses 4-8. This is one of the best, and most concise summaries in the Bible of what salvation is. This is what God does for us. Yes, people are stuck in sin. But God didn’t leave us this way. Instead, He brought help, relief, grace.

Verse 4, “God our Savior showed us how good and kind He is. He saved us because of His mercy, and not because of any good things that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning. God sent Jesus Christ our Savior to give us His Spirit. Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life. This message is certainly true.” Focus on this!

This alone makes Titus worthwhile. Church, let’s try to read this every day this week. Can you do that? This is good stuff! Because God is good and kind and merciful, that’s why He saved us. Not because of anything we have done. So don’t get self-righteous. You’re no better before God than the person you can’t stand the most.

God washed us clean by the Holy Spirit’s power. Because of that, we are made new, no longer slaves to sin and selfishness and defiance, and we have a new future. God sent Jesus to give us His Spirit, not because we deserve it. Jesus made us acceptable to God, taking away our sin and separation from God, and giving us life forever. Don’t ever doubt this!

PP#11: Productive Living

1. Live a Changed Life (Titus 3:1-3)
2. How Change Happens (Titus 3:4-7)

“Jesus...made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life.” -Titus 3:7

Paul gives this amazing summary to explain how this change happens in people. Our world teaches us that our problems are outside of us—what we encounter in our lives and in our world, our situations—and that the solution is within us—we just need to reach deep within, focus, and prioritize. But this is not the Gospel. Actually the opposite is true. The problem is inside of us—our bent to self and sin before God—and the solution is outside of us—it comes only as a gift from God. We need to share this great reversal with our world. It's not our spirits, it's the Holy Spirit! Self-improvement can only take us so far. Ultimately, we simply need to be made known from the inside out! We need the transformation that is intended by the Father, earned by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit. The Father wills it. The Son achieves it. The Spirit applies it. Salvation.

PP#12: Titus 3 (CEV)

8 This message is certainly true. These teachings are useful and helpful for everyone. I want you to insist that the people follow them, so that all who have faith in God will be sure to do good deeds. 9 But don't have anything to do with stupid arguments about ancestors. And stay away from disagreements and quarrels about the Law of Moses. Such arguments are useless and senseless. 10 Warn troublemakers once or twice. Then don't have anything else to do with them. 11 You know that their minds are twisted, and their own sins show how guilty they are.

Verse 8, "This message is certainly true. These teachings are useful and helpful for everyone. I want you to insist that the people follow them, so that all who have faith in God will be sure to do good deeds. But don't have anything to do with stupid arguments about ancestors. And stay away from disagreements and quarrels about the Law of Moses. Such arguments are useless and senseless. Warn troublemakers once or twice. Then don't have anything else to do with them. You know that their minds are twisted, and their own sins show how guilty they are."

Insist on this salvation teaching. Teach it to everyone. Why? *So that* believers will be sure to do good deeds. Belief and behavior are together. God's Gospel goal is godliness.

And do you notice? When Paul wants to encourage good deeds, he goes back to, stresses the Gospel of salvation when he wants to encourage good deeds. He doesn't go to good deeds when he wants to stress good deeds. "Be a good person. Do good things." Nope. No lists of rules, dos and don'ts. Instead, he goes back to the Gospel. This is where deeds come from. Without it, our deeds only consume us.

PP#13: Productive Living

1. Live a Changed Life (Titus 3:1-3)
2. How Change Happens (Titus 3:4-7)
3. Foster a Changed Life (Titus 3:8-13)

"All who have faith in God will be sure to do good deeds." -Titus 3:8b

But with it, deeds naturally happen. They are a consequence, a natural outgrowth of the Gospel in us. It's like growing taller. We can't make it happen. It is just part of, as we say, "growing up." If you're not growing at, say age 12, then something is wrong. If we are not living differently once we give our lives to Jesus, then something is wrong. If we are not giving shade and blessing to others around us, something is wrong.

If you want to grow spiritually—the Bible calls this sanctification—spend time with Jesus. Read Titus 3:4-7 over and over again. Absorb it. It is when we have a better grasp of where we have come

from, of what God has done for us, then we grow spiritually. It comes from gratitude! Fill your mind with the truth of the Gospel. Our works don't attest in any way to us. Our works are good only when they attest to the character of God.

PP#14: Titus 3 (CEV)

8 This message is certainly true. These teachings are useful and helpful for everyone. I want you to insist that the people follow them, so that all who have faith in God will be sure to do good deeds. 9 But don't have anything to do with stupid arguments about ancestors. And stay away from disagreements and quarrels about the Law of Moses. Such arguments are useless and senseless. 10 Warn troublemakers once or twice. Then don't have anything else to do with them. 11 You know that their minds are twisted, and their own sins show how guilty they are.

And Paul goes back to those teachers who say you have to follow the Jewish customs. Don't follow them. Don't give them the platform to teach. They claim authority by their Jewish lineage. But it is faith that makes a Christian! Don't get caught up into their quarrels.

Those who continue to cause trouble—and here Paul means defiantly divisive and intentionally subversive—try to correct. But if they stubbornly refuse to listen, then walk away. Leave them be. Don't engage them. It is better for them to be on their own, than to be allowed to continue to be malicious, destroying the unity of the church family.

Harsh words, aren't they? But still true. You can't behave in just any way you want and think the church will always take you just as you are. Sometimes people need to be left alone before they can become ready to be a part of the group. It's not like everyone has to think alike. But everyone does have to try to get along. There is no way to continue with folks who refuse to behave as a part of the church family. Continue to love them, pray for them, and hope they will change. And wait.

PP#15: Titus 3 (CEV)

12 I plan to send Artemas or Tychicus to you. After he arrives, please try your best to meet me at Nicopolis. I have decided to spend the winter there.

13 When Zenas the lawyer and Apollos get ready to leave, help them as much as you can, so they won't have need of anything.

14 Our people should learn to spend their time doing something useful and worthwhile.

15 Greetings to you from everyone here. Greet all of our friends who share in our faith.

I pray that the Lord will be kind to all of you!

We're out of time, so just a brief look at Paul's closing. Verse 12, "I plan to send Artemas or Tychicus to you. After he arrives, please try your best to meet me at Nicopolis. I have decided to spend the winter there." Evidently Paul hopes to get out of prison, or is out of prison. He's replacing Titus on Crete so Titus can come to him.

"13 When Zenas the lawyer and Apollos get ready to leave, help them as much as you can, so they won't have need of anything." You know, this is the only place Zenas is mentioned in the Bible. We know nothing else about him, besides that he is perhaps the only Christian lawyer that there ever was...kidding! Sorry, that was a lawyer joke!

But I love this. Zenas is a normal person, doing civilian things. And yet he is working with Paul to make a difference. This is you and me. We are Zenas. We do, what we do, in a way that blesses God and brings blessings to others. Zenas is a Titus 3 Christian!

Verse 14, “Our people should learn to spend their time doing something useful and worthwhile.” Underline that. This is the main theme of Titus. Productive living.

PP#16: Productive Living

1. Live a Changed Life (Titus 3:1-3)
2. How Change Happens (Titus 3:4-7)
3. Foster a Changed Life (Titus 3:8-13)

What does that look like? Productive living is living a changed life. It comes from God, as a gift from the Father, because of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. And God’s grace changes us, grows us, makes us a blessing. Gospel belief and gospel behavior. They go together. God’s Gospel goal is godliness.

You know, the temperatures outside are rising as we head into summer. The sun’s going to get pretty hot. Imagine how pleasant it is to sit under a shady tree.

That’s you. That’s who you are to be. That big, shady tree offering blessing and relief and fruit to all those around. God has called you, and poured His Holy Spirit in you, to be useful and worthwhile.

PP#17: Titus 3 (CEV)

12 I plan to send Artemas or Tychicus to you. After he arrives, please try your best to meet me at Nicopolis. I have decided to spend the winter there.

13 When Zenas the lawyer and Apollos get ready to leave, help them as much as you can, so they won’t have need of anything.

14 Our people should learn to spend their time doing something useful and worthwhile.

15 Greetings to you from everyone here. Greet all of our friends who share in our faith. I pray that the Lord will be kind to all of you!

Verse 15, “Greetings to you from everyone here. Greet all of our friends who share in our faith. I pray that the Lord will be kind to all of you!”

Amen.

Closing Song: “This Is My Father’s World”

Benediction: David

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR JUNE 12, 2016

Sermon: “Productive Living”

Scripture: Titus 3:1-15

Opening prayer

Introductions: Share about

Background: Skim Titus 1-2. Share what you remember about this book, it’s author, and situation.

Read: Titus 3:1-15

1. Verse 1. What is the Christian’s relationship to the civil government? Why? Is this true even when the government is ungodly? (Think about how the early Christians treated the government that persecuted them.)

2. Verse 2. How should Christians treat all people? Why?

3. Verse 3. Why does Paul remind the Christians what they used to be like?

4. Verses 4-8. This is a short explanation of salvation. Pull out the main points, and explain them in your own words.

5. Read verses 4-7 again. What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you through these verses now?

6. Verse 8. Why are verses 4-8 “useful and helpful for everyone”? Why does Paul want to insist on them?

7. Verses 9-11. Paul again refutes those who insist on following Jewish customs. Why are they useless and senseless?

8. Verse 10. Should obstinant and destructive people be forced to leave a church? Why or why not? Describe a time when someone was forced to leave a church...or describe a time when you wished someone would have been forced to leave. What was the result?

9. Verses 12-15. This is the only place where Zenas is mentioned. How do you imagine him?

10. Verse 14. What is your reaction to this verse?

11. Close with the ending words of Titus, “I pray that the Lord will be kind to all of you!”

12. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?