Message 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 Rev. Jin Hur

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.—1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

In my ministry and preaching of God's message, I usually draw on preferred terms such as invitation, friendship, relationship, fellowship, connection, and encouragement. Yet the Apostle Paul's choices diverge, favoring appealing, urging, blameless, and holiness. He returns to these words across multiple chapters of 1 Thessalonians. Do you like those words: appealing, urging, blameless, or holiness? What might he appeal to the Thessalonians? What did the Apostle Paul want the congregations to do in this new mission field?

First, in today's passage, Paul asked the church to honor those who work among them, lead them in the Lord, and offer guidance. This idea seems hopeful yet difficult to apply when honoring those who labor, oversee, and direct us in our reality. Who are the people we should respect—those who work hard among us, lead us in the Lord, and occasionally guide us in our context? I think they include not only professional ministers like pastors, Conference Superintendents, or bishops, but also all lay leaders and all servants striving for the kin-dom of God. Paul calls us to value them with love because of their holy work, which spans physical effort and every spiritual attempt to show God's love and expand the kin-dom of God.

Furthermore, Paul strongly urges harmony among us. How might we cultivate peace among ourselves, including those who work, supervise, and lead? I believe one way to express this faith is to welcome one another and provide mutual support. In other words, it is a practice of forming a spiritual bond between us, much like the connection we seek with the Lord.

In the setting of Centennial, I would respectfully ask you to honor those who have worked so diligently for its ministries. I appreciate all formal lay leaders, including the leadership board members, all servants and volunteers across every area and event, and formal pastors who have served this congregation with full hearts and minds. I especially value Rev. Brian Hacklander, Rev. Whitney Sheridan, Rev. Jen Anderson, and the many senior and associate pastors who have served Centennial over many decades.

Pastor Whitney continues to collaborate with me in **e**levating Centennial congregations toward the grace of the Lord. We acknowledge their boundless dedication and sacrifice for our ministries and the reign of God. I also wish to thank our current staff and lay leaders across both campuses, particularly the new admin board and the mission and ministry teams for each site, and the new outreach ministry team. We are relaunching the outreach ministry team as combined compassion, open door, and justice teams. They are investing substantial time and effort to rebuild this faithful congregation and guide us into the next chapter of mission and ministry. Your support and prayer matter as our ministries renew our minds and restore our hearts in Christ, because the Lord continues to call us forward on our spiritual journey with hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen.

And we urge you, brothers and sisters, to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.—1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

Thus, Apostle Paul instructs us today to caution the idle, encourage the discouraged, assist the weak, and remain patient with everyone. These were the second points Paul wished to urge upon the congregations in the new mission field, the city of Thessalonica. These lines form the core of the Wesleyan General Rule: do no harm, do good, and attend to all the ordinances of God.

- ***Do no harm": avoid evil of every kind, including harmful words and actions. In this world.***
- ***Do good": show mercy and help others whenever possible, attending to both physical and spiritual needs.***
- ***Attend upon all the ordinances of God": participate in practices that nurture faith: public worship, hearing and reading Scripture, Holy Communion, family and private prayer, and fasting or abstinence(self-control). — umc.org***

I believe we, Centennial family of faith, are thriving under these principles. As a Reconciling Congregation, we uphold inclusion to prevent harmful words and actions in the world. We remain kind, generous, and gentle, continuing to pres**e**nt ourselves in a broken world through good works. We attend public worship and small groups to learn from Scripture, practicing faith through Holy Communion, prayer meetings, and

networking by the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God!

Thank you again for your consistent attendance and participation in Jesus' mission and ministry. I am especially impressed by your broad volunteering across ministries such as worship ministry, compassion, open door, and justice ministries, local community support, facility maintenance, and music and visual art ministries.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Therefore, today's passage highlights once more—rejoice, pray, and give thanks—during this meaningful season. I recognize that every season carries its own significance, particularly for me as I begin my first year in this new appointment at Centennial. I appeal to you to share your warmth and vibrant spirit in Jesus by engaging as much as you can with the activities, ministries, and vision of Centennial UMC during this wonderful season and throughout the coming year.

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can, in all the places you can,
at all the times you can, to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can.—John Wesley

So, I would like to remind you of what we should be careful to keep doing in ministry during these hopeful and joyful seasons ahead.

Do not extinguish the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt. But examine all things; hold fast to what is good. Stay away from every form of evil… Pray for us.—1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, 25[New English Translation]

Siblings in Christ, please offer prayers for us, which means praying for Centennial's ministries; please pray for the pastors, lay leaders, and the new admin board. We need your spiritual support with prayers and blessings. Of course, all pastoral staff and lay leaders will pray for you and bless you in the name of Jesus. Please extend support to both the mission and ministry teams, as well as the volunteers who serve with quiet diligence. They require your spiritual encouragement through prayers and blessings.

Do you know what the greatest blessings from Jesus were? I believe that one of the most beautiful blessings from Jesus is that He brought the true light into our lives and

this world. I have also observed that some people in our community bring light while others bring darkness into our lives. Do you also wish to illuminate those nearby? As followers of Jesus, we should bring light wherever we are.

Here is a suggestion for adding light to your life: when you enter any space, offer a smile to others. I believe smiles create light around us. I noticed that my face is so bright when I take a selfie. So, not only during selfie time but also when we meet others, let us bring the light with smiles. What about practicing a smile each morning while standing before a mirror in your bathroom?

Let us continue to practice smiles and bring light to ourselves and others as an expression of faith as followers of Jesus. A smile reflects more than a facial expression; it conveys our lifestyle and attitude toward others and toward the mission of Christ into the world. It represents kindness, gentleness, and generosity shared with family, community, and the world. Because these qualities are another name for love, a smile encourages mutual support, care, and dedication to mission and ministry. Let us continue to love God and love neighbors with smiles, openness, support, inclusion, and our dedication to church in Christ.

Finally, this is my blessing for you.

May the God of peace Godself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and the Lord will do this. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.—1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 28

Thanks be to God! Amen!