



61A PENTECOST 20A - LITURGY

Imitators and influencers

Abstract

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Your faith in God has become known everywhere.

1 Thessalonians 1:4–8

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61A Pentecost 20A - Liturgy

Imitators and influencers

Sunday, October 18, 2020 | After Pentecost | Proper 24 | Year A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Exodus 33:12–23

Psalm Psalm 99

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Isaiah 45:1–7

Psalm Psalm 96:1–9 (10–13)

New Testament 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

Gospel Matthew 22:15–22

1 Thessalonians 1.1-10

Paul and his companions gratefully greet those who responded joyfully to their gospel message. The Holy Spirit empowered the proclaiming and receiving of the word, and the faith, hope and love at work in the community are already inspiring others who hear of them.

This week's resources explore: living a life worth imitating.

Pre-Service	O Lord The Clouds Are Gathering - Graham Kendrick (Lyric Video)
Greeting	<p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all</p> <p>and also with us</p>
We Gather	<p>Sing to the Lord, and praise him, proclaim his glory to all the world, for the Lord is great and highly to be praised.</p> <p>Sing to the Lord, sing a new song to the Lord.</p> <p><i>Let us pray</i> May the grace of God be among us, and the peace of God be on our hearts. Amen.</p>
Hymn/song	They'll know we are Christians by our love Scholtes

Welcome

Imitators and influencers

Let us pray

Holy Spirit, be among us as we meet to worship,
as we sing and as we read,
as we listen and as we speak,
as we hear and come to know,
as we learn and begin to understand.
Holy Spirit, be among us.
Amen.

Readings

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

Paul, Silas and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace to you.

² We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. ³ We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. ⁶ You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. ⁷ And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸ The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, ⁹ for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. ¹

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hymn/song/video

Graham Kendrick - Jesus Restore To Us Again (From Spark to a Flame)

We say Sorry

We confess before you, O God,
that we are not always a good example
of what it is to be a Christian.

We do not feel worthy
that others should follow us.

¹ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

And yet, Lord,
 you encourage us to share your love
 and reveal your truth
 and lead others to you.

We confess that we fail, and we are sorry.
 We confess our inadequacies and carelessness
 in standing up for what is right against what is wrong.

Forgive us, Lord,
 and guide us in the ways of truth and justice.
 We want to be a good example,
 a shining example of what it means to be a Christian,
 a follower of Jesus.

Amen.

Hymn/Song

Firm Foundation Nancy Gordon and Jamie Harvill, America's 25 Best Praise Worship Songs Vol 2

Response

People of Influence

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Two “powerful” men who lived at the turn of the 13th century.

The first of these men chose the name Innocent
 when he was unanimously declared Pope in 1198.

He took Jeremiah 1:10 as his ordination verse:

“See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down,
 to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Pope Innocent lived by this verse.

Innocent believed that his position gave him the power to rule over all people;
 anyone who challenged him was subject to excommunication.

He used his position to intimidate kings and rulers.

Yet his name is largely forgotten today.

At the same time,

another man from a tiny town in Italy
 was laying down his own power to take up the cross of Christ.

Francis was born to a wealthy family in the small town of Assisi.

He lived a life of ease and self-centeredness
 until two tragic events brought him to his knees:

he suffered a serious illness,

and then, while serving as a soldier,
 was taken captive and held as a prisoner of war for one year.

Through his sufferings, Francis came to know Jesus Christ,

and he dedicated himself to serving Christ among the poor and the sick.

In a day when poverty was rampant,

Francis turned his back on his family’s wealth and lived as a beggar.

He ministered among lepers,

even embracing and kissing those

whom the rest of the world called “outcast” and “unclean.”

Francis took as his motto Matthew 10: 7-10,
 “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of God is near.’
 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.
 Freely you have received, freely give.”

Francis had no power, as the world would define power.
 Yet the power of God working through him
 gave him an influence greater than anyone would ever imagine.

Francis and his motley crew travelled to Rome to gain an audience with Pope Innocent.
 Innocent suggested disdainfully that Francis go “roll in the mud with the pigs.”
 The pompous Pope had no idea who he was dealing with!

Francis, in all humility, left the papal offices and went to the nearest pig sty,
 where he rolled on the ground in the mud.

His sole focus was on continuing his ministry among the poor and sick.
 If that required humiliating himself at the direction of the papal authority,
 then Francis would gladly humiliate himself.

Pope Innocent was so moved by Francis’ devotion that he gave official status to Francis’ ministry.
 And that ministry continues today
 through schools, hospitals, and service ministries led by the Franciscans.
 Francis’ influence continues almost 800 years after he lived,
 because he gave up his power in order to let God’s power work through him.ⁱ

Two men.
 One had enormous power,
 the other had a much more lasting influence.
 In any organization, there are two kinds of power:
 positional and personal.

We do what our bosses tell us to do. Position matters.
 Children obey . . . well, to a point.
 But there is a difference between the raw exercise of power and influence.
 Innocent III had power. Francis had influence.

Paul was arguably the second most influential person who ever lived,
 after his Lord.
 He is still, after 2000 years, influencing the world,
 yet he held no formal position.

It is said that wherever Paul went
 he either started a revival or a riot,
 and most of the time it was both.

Paul went into Thessalonica, a large city of about 200,000 people at the tip of the Aegean Sea.
 Acts 17 tells us Paul and Silas began to share Christ in the local synagogue.
 Some Jews and many Gentiles were converted.
 Three weeks later riots began.

Leaders at the synagogue brought Paul and Silas before the local magistrates.

They said:

“These men who have turned the world upside down
have come here also, and Jason has received them;
and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar,
saying that there is another king, Jesus.” Acts 17:6-7 (RSV)ⁱⁱ
“These men who have turned the world upside down . . .” That’s influence.

Today more than a billion people call themselves Christian
most of them due indirectly to the work of these two men. That’s influence.

Notice that our lesson is all about influence
the influence that Paul and Silas had
and the influence that the church at Thessalonica had.

Paul writes: “Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power,
with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

You know how we lived among you for your sake.

You became imitators of us and of the Lord;
in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message
with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.”

Influence. Paul modelled faith for the Thessalonians and they modelled faith for others.
I want us to focus on becoming people of influence.

There are very few subjects that are as important.

People of influence, first of all, are driven by a passion.

What was Paul’s passion? One word sums it up. Christ.
people of influence have a passion.

A passion for their family, a passion for their work, a passion for their community,
a passion for their church, a passion for Christ-like living.

What is it you are passionate about?

If you want to be a great parent or grandparent,

If you want to be a high performer at work, you need to be passionate about it.

Do you think that people like Albert Schweitzer, Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr.
changed their world by merely wishing it to be true?

They gave their all and so do we.

But there is a second thing that people of influence have that sets them apart.

They have a respect for people.

You cannot lead people if you do not believe in them and respect them.

Notice how St. Paul begins this chapter:

“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.

We continually remember before our God and Father
your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love,
and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you . . .”

What high praise Paul is bestowing on the people of this church, but he means it.
 Paul knows that God works through people, all kinds of people.
 He knows that God has gifted people in different ways
 and he believes that the work of the kingdom is done
 when people exercise their gifts accordingly.

People are smart. They are not dummies.
 People who influence others know this.
 They know that in order to be effective
 they must help others use their natural intelligence for the collective good.
 Each of us is smart in our own way.
 Each of us has strengths and each of us has weaknesses.
 A person of influence helps us give our best.
 A person of influence is driven by a passion.
 A person of influence respects people, all people.

People of influence also decide to make a difference.
 They determine that God put them here for a reason
 and they seek to live out God's purpose for their lives.
 It's so easy to drift through life. It's so easy to drift through our jobs.
 Some of us drifted into our marriages.
 Some of us drifted into our present state of health. \

We could have made better choices,
 but it would have taken too much energy, too much stress.
 Drifting. Like a piece of wood being carried along a lazy river.
 Where will we land?

Isn't it time to make a decision?
 Isn't it time to take charge of our lives?

People of influence decide to make a difference.
 Paul made a difference, because he made a decision for Jesus Christ.
 That is the most important decision of all, and we bless his name to this day.

The emperor Nero had the power,
 but Paul had the passion, the love for people and, most of all, the love for Christ.
 Today people name their dogs Nero and their sons Paul.

In the thirteenth century Innocent had the power.
 Francis had the passion, the love for people and the dedication to Christ.
 Hardly anyone remembers Innocent today,
 hundreds of thousands of people each year journey to the small town of Assisi
 to honour St. Francis.

Are we determined to make a difference?
 What is our passion?
 How do you feel about other people?

Answer these questions and you are on the path to becoming a person of influence.
 Amen

Hymn/song

The servant song (Brother sister let me serve you)

Prayers for all people

*Think of who first told you stories of Jesus;
who first influenced you to make you want to be a Christian,
and to want to find out more about the Jesus story.*

*Let these names and faces be part of your praying and worship,
and a part of your living and witness.*

Who will name you as their influence in days or years to come?

Lord Jesus, in our quiet moments,
may we offer our innermost desires and yearnings to you,
that we may more and more walk our path in life
conscious of you being at our side.

Lord God,
in our corner of the world
it isn't easy to really feel the pain of persecution for our faith,
but we know that it happens.

We pray for those who are persecuted and punished,
violated and scarred because of their faith.

We pray for those who despite these things
speak out and speak up,
and witness to you, the living God.

We pray for the families of these people
that they may be given strength and support
in their own faith and discipleship.

We pray for those who teach us of you,
who unpack your truths,
who explain what living a Christian life is
and how to follow you.

We pray for those who guide us in times of struggles with our faith,
those who stand by us in times of denial and bewilderment.

We pray for those who are dying in the faith,
and those who are struggling to find their faith before they die.

For these and all your witnesses, Lord, we pray.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever.

AMEN

Hymn/song	Jesus put this song into our hearts Kendrick
We are sent out	<p>Into a world of confusion and disbelief, into a world of welcome and rejection, we take the grace of God that has been among us, and the peace of God that has been on our hearts.</p> <p>Amen.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace</p>
Benediction	A firm foundation
Thank you	

ⁱ James L. Garlow, *The Twenty-One Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004).

ⁱⁱ http://www.christianstudy.com/data/nt/habit_number_four.txt. Rev. Tom Dooley, 2 Peter 1:1-10.