

*“Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist”
– charge to Dr. Zac Hicks*

We gather to worship the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are grateful for Chelsea Presbyterian Church and for her pastor James Daniels. We are thankful for the opportunity to dedicate Zac Hicks to the work of an evangelist. The setting is the cafeteria of Chelsea Middle School and the apostle Paul reminds us that we are **“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word”** (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

After describing some of the challenges facing the church, Paul says, **“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge the duties of your ministry”** (2 Tim. 4:5). The apostle identifies challenges that are surprisingly contemporary: godless chatter, false teaching, foolish and stupid arguments, a self-centered fixation, outwardly religious but inwardly powerless, indifferent toward the truth, no stomach for solid teaching, addicted to spiritual junk food, and fascinated with me, myself, and I. In response, the apostle offered simple spiritual direction: **“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge the duties of your ministry”** (2 Tim. 4:5).

“Keep your head” is a shorthand expressions that speaks volumes and requires little elaboration. The apostle’s one liners is all that he needs to say: **Guard the good deposit of the gospel with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you** (2 Tim. 1:14); **Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; Preach the Word.** Flee evil. Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. Don’t engage in foolish and stupid arguments. Be kind to everyone. Instruct gently. Don’t be resentful. Preach the word with great patience and careful instruction.

In just a few verses above, Paul said to Timothy, **“You know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, [and] sufferings.”** There is a whole lot of life, you and Abby have experienced in Christ. You are well-prepared to **“Keep your head in all situations. Endure hardship.”**

You have known and lived the truth of Psalm 127 for many years, **“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves.”** The Lord takes the lead in this gospel endeavor and today we charge Zac to rest in this great truth. The second part of this Psalm is also important for “keeping your head in all situations,” because it says, “Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.” As the Lord builds this household of faith, we pray that Joel, Jesse, Bronwyn, and Brody, will experience life in a little seminary. May they be the first to experience your love in Christ.

Paul's challenge is straightforward, "Do the work of an evangelist." Zac, today we reaffirm your call to preach the word — to proclaim the gospel. This work is aptly expressed in the *Church of the Cross's mission statement*: WE EXIST TO RECEIVE AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS, TO FOLLOW HIS WAY, AND TO INVITE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME. The apostle's mission statement describes this well: **"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me"** (Col. 1:28-29).

Your life and work is defined by Jesus in three great ways:

First, by his great invitation: **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light"** (Matt. 11:28-30).

Second, by his great commandment: **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Jesus said, "This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself"** (Matt. 22:37-39).

Third, by Jesus' great commission: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"** (Matt. 28:18-20).

Finally, the way Paul prayed for "God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus," is how we pray for you:

"... I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. May the Church of the Cross remove all barriers to the gospel.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. May the Church of the Cross experience the inside-out reality of the power of the gospel.

And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. May the Church of the Cross show the love of Christ that lives out what is said in words.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." May the Church of the Cross know the glory of God through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.