

**The Rightly Ordered Church:**  
**Hands, Hemlines, and Helping People See Jesus** (1 Timothy 2:8-10)  
Preached by Pastor Jason Tarn at HCC on February 18, 2018

**Introduction**

- ❖ This morning I want to talk about helping people see Jesus. **Because that's a primary function of the church.** We're suppose to help people see Jesus. That goes back to the purpose statement of Paul's letter. In 1 Timothy 3:15, he describes the church as a pillar of the truth. Our job is to hold up and hold out the truth of the gospel for all to see.
  - This letter was written to Timothy and the Ephesian church that he was pastoring. And as I've said before, it was an apt illustration for the Ephesians because they knew exactly how pillars work. The famous Temple of Artemis was housed in their city, and it boasted 60-foot high pillars that thrust the temple roof high up in the sky.
  
- ❖ **Imagine if you were an ancient traveler trying to make your way to Ephesus, but you get lost and disoriented.** You don't know where to go and it's getting dark. You fear the possibility of having to spend the night exposed out in the open country. But then you look up and a long way off in the distant horizon you see the setting sun reflecting off something. You stare hard enough and realize it's the marble roof of the famous temple in Ephesus. Imagine your relief now that you can see where you're trying to go.
  
- ❖ That's what Paul means when he says the church is a pillar of the truth. We hold up and hold out Jesus for the lost to see where to find salvation. A modern example would be that of a lighthouse. **Imagine the church, like a lighthouse, is trying to help people – who are lost in darkness and tossed about by the storms of life – to help them see where safety lies.**
  - Paul already gave us the imagery of a shipwreck back in chapter 1. Imagine scores of people lost at sea and in great peril. They're facing imminent destruction. **What they need most of all is a lighthouse on shore to brightly shine its light, pointing them to safety.** Helping them see where rescue can be found.
    - But imagine if that lighthouse is so distracted by infighting between its operators, that they fail to even turn on the lights. Or imagine if they're so concerned with appearances – spending so much time debating the exterior color or the interior design of their building – that they fail to maintain their spotlight bulbs, which flicker and fade out. **That lighthouse would be guilty of obscuring people's view of where to find their salvation.**
  
- ❖ Church, that's what our text is warning. **If our job, as the church, is to help people see the Lord, then we have to realize that our behavior might obscure their view of Jesus.** That's Paul's burden here. He said in chapter 3:15 that he's writing these instructions so that we might know "*how one ought to behave*" in the church. And here in chapter 2, it's all about how we behave in our public gatherings, specifically our corporate worship.
  - **The way we conduct ourselves in corporate worship – the way we order ourselves – is suppose to point to Jesus.** When Christians and non-Christians worship with us, the goal is for all of us to see Jesus more clearly.
    - **But there are two big obstructions commonly found in churches that tend to block people's view of Jesus.** And not only are they common to churches, they're common to men and women, respectively.

- ❖ **In our passage, Paul is going to describe these two obstructions as gender-prone sins.** He's going to make distinctions between men and women in the church, and he's going to make generalizations about each. **He's going to say that men have a propensity towards anger and argumentation** (which will obscure Jesus) **and women have a propensity towards showiness and ostentation** (which will also make Jesus harder to see).
  - Now I know that's going to make some of you uncomfortable. Well Paul's going to go on in vv11-15 to give more instructions for women in the church that'll make you even more uncomfortable. And we'll get there in a couple of weeks.
    - But in our day – with so much talk about gender fluidity and transgenderism, about breaking out of a gender binary – **to then read a Bible passage that makes a clear binary distinction between men and women and applies generalizations to each – I can imagine strong reactions to what seems like very regressive teaching.**
  
- ❖ I knew the latter half of chapter 2 would be controversial, but I came to realize that today's passage can ruffle just as many feathers. So I want to be sensitive in the way we cover these verses. **But I think the most loving thing I can do is to *not* obscure the very words of Scripture.** I believe all of Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). All of it, including controversial passages, originates from God himself. Paul wrote these words and made these gender distinctions, but God inspired him.
  - So when Paul says in v8, "*I desire*", that doesn't mean what follows is just his personal opinion. Remember, he's an apostle (cf. 2:7), so he speaks with apostolic authority on behalf of God. **So everything that follows should be heard as God's instructions for the right ordering of our public worship.**
    - So if I don't teach these verses with accuracy and clarity, if it makes them obscure and vague, I risk obscuring your view of God and making him vague. That's the last thing I want to do. My whole point is for you to see Jesus.
  
- ❖ So I ask you to withhold judgment against Paul. To not brush him aside as a chauvinist. **Let me help you see what he's saying to the church – to the men and women of the church.** There are some instructions here that – while not inapplicable to women – are most pressing for men. And other instructions – while not irrelevant to men – are most urgent for women.
  - So let's first address the men of the church because that's what Paul does in v8, and then we'll talk to the women following his words in vv9-10.

### **To the Men of the Church**

- ❖ Paul's instructions to the men of the church can be summarized like this: **If we want to help people see Jesus, then brothers in the church must worship in holy unity and not in argumentation.** Let's read v8 again. "*I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling*".
  - Now his mention of "*in every place*" would suggest that these instructions were not just for the Ephesian church. But rather they're applicable wherever the church gathers as the church to worship. *In every place* that occurs.

- ❖ Now his focus is on the men when they pray. But remember this is all in the context of corporate worship, so we're not just talking about private prayers or just the pastoral prayer in a worship service. V8 would apply to our singing of songs and our confessing of sins. Those elements in a worship service can be rightly seen as prayers to God. So I'm going to expand Paul's instruction here into three parts and use worship as synonymous with prayer.
- ❖ **The first thing he says is for men to worship (pray to) their Lord with suitable expression.** Specifically he says, "*in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands*". Now we should be careful not to make too much out of the body gesture of lifting your hands when you worship. We know Paul is not mandating a posture. Because you can find, throughout Scripture, a wide range of body postures when people worship.
  - **In the Bible it was quite normal for people, when they publicly gathered to worship, to remain standing.** In Nehemiah 9, when all the Israelites assembled, the Levites led them in worship and began by saying, "*Stand up and bless the LORD*". And in Luke 18, we think of the Pharisee and tax collector each *standing* by himself praying to the Lord. And of course there's that Revelation 7 vision of a great multitude no one can count *standing* before the throne of the Lamb.
    - **And along with standing, a very common gesture in worship was the lifting or spreading of your hands.** Psalm 28:2 says, "*I lift my hands toward your most holy sanctuary*." (cf. Ps. 63:4; 134:2). In 1 Kings 8:22, we're told that King Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord to pray, "*and spread out his hands towards heaven*." In Nehemiah 8:6, after Ezra blessed the Lord, "*all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands*."
- ❖ **But standing with your hands stretched to heaven is not the only posture we find in Scripture.** Sometimes worshippers sat (2 Sam. 7:18). Sometimes they knelt (1 Kg. 8:54; Ps. 95:6). Sometimes they laid prostrate with their face to the ground (Neh. 8:6). What they did with their bodies and their hands varied.
  - Likewise when you worship, you can stand, sit, kneel, lay prostrate, and your hands can be lifted, spread out, folded, clapping, or waving. There's freedom here. Don't make too much of posture. The point is to worship with suitable expression. **No matter what posture you adopt, the question is whether it's an appropriate cultural and personal expression of an inward heart of worship.**
- ❖ **And if you don't know what an appropriate cultural expression of worship looks like when conducted by men, then I recommend going to a local sporting event.** You'll see tons of men expressing their devotion to a team in culturally relevant ways – with hands lifted high, with shouts and chanting, and little concern for how they look.
  - **Brothers, if you feel free to lift your hands when watching sports, then what's stopping you when worshipping Jesus?** What does that say about your heart? Now don't feel obligated to lift your hands. If you're the kind of guy who can watch his favorite team win a championship and your reaction is a quiet golf clap, then it wouldn't be suitable for you to be worshipping the Lord with shouts and raised hands.

- ❖ Worship your Lord with suitable expression. Use your hands as you see fit, but understand that the real emphasis in Paul's command is on what your hands represent. **The second thing he's saying to men in the church is for them to worship their Lord with holy hands of unity.** Notice he says to lift holy hands "*without anger or quarreling*".
  - The emphasis is on unity in your relationships. Are you angry at others? Is there conflict or quarreling in your life? Perhaps with someone in the church? Perhaps with your wife or children? Paul is saying there's no integrity in your worship if your life is marked at the same time by anger or quarreling. **You can't stretch your hands towards God and at the same time clench your fists towards a neighbor.**
  
- ❖ Brother, you can stand here on a Sunday morning with hands lifted high in worship, but if your heart is filled with anger and your home is filled with strife – then you're not only hindering your own worship (1 Pet. 3:7), you're not helping others see God.
  - **Fathers, you're not helping your children see their heavenly Father** – you're obscuring their view – if they see their earthly father always carrying around anger and bitterness. **Husbands, you're not helping your wife see Christ**, if her earthly bridegroom is so quick tempered and argumentative.
    - Brothers, we're not helping people see Jesus if we're prone to quarrel over theology, over politics, over sports. Our infighting conceals the beauty of the body of Christ. Disunity, disharmony, discord within the church is one of the biggest obstructions keeping lost people from seeing Jesus. It turns them off.
  
- ❖ That's why Paul highlights it, and he addresses it to the brothers in the church because he knows men are particularly susceptible and often at fault. It's not as if sisters never get upset or quarrel. **But anger and argumentation are gender prone sins that Christian men have to deal with.** It's tied to our ego and pride. It's something we need to repent of.
  - So use those hands to beat your chest and ask the Lord to be merciful to you, a sinner. And then lift those hands and ask Jesus to give you his strength, his self-control. So that you can deal with anger in righteousness just as he did. Remember, Jesus got angry but he didn't sin. Jesus was righteous in his anger. **And with his help you can deal with your own anger in righteousness, so that it doesn't end up driving a wedge between you and the ones you love.** And cause them to lose sight of Jesus.
  
- ❖ And beyond dealing with your own anger, brothers, we need to take on the personal responsibility of working for the peace and unity of the church. **We're being encouraged to worship our Lord with humble hands of peace.** Use your hands to make peace.
  - The Lord himself taught that the worship of God is incompatible with a heart that ignores conflict and refuses to reconcile. In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us to leave our gifts at the altar and go and first be reconciled with others before you go on worshipping in prayer or in song (Mt. 5:23-24).
    - Or in Mark 11:25 Jesus says, "*And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*"

- ❖ Brothers, preach the gospel to yourself. **Remember how Jesus didn't lash out in anger in spite of your trespasses, in spite of all the ways you've slighted him.** Instead he took your place on the cross and absorbed the righteous anger of God that was set against your sin. Remember that the next time you feel like stewing in your anger, feeling sorry for yourself.
  - Brothers, let's do our job. Let's be a pillar of the truth. Let's be a lighthouse of the gospel. Let's help people see Jesus – and not obscure their view – by being men of peace who worship our Lord in holy unity and not in argumentation.

### To the Women of the Church

- ❖ Now let's switch gears and turn our attention to the women of the church. **Like with the men, if sisters in the church want to help people see Jesus, then they must worship in modest beauty and not in ostentation.** Let's take a careful look at what Paul says in vv9-10, *"<sup>9</sup>likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup>but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-with good works."*
- ❖ Notice that Paul *wants* women to adorn themselves. He recognizes that women are created beautiful by God in order to reflect the beauty of God. And so they should seek to exhibit that God-given beauty. Let's be clear here: Paul's not instructing women to cover up and hide their beauty. He's not telling Christian women to look plain and dowdy. As if frumpiness is a sign of godliness. **The question is not *whether* you should adorn your beauty but *how* do you go about doing it?**
- ❖ I think there are three answers to that in the text. **The first is for the sisters of the church to adorn their beauty with modest dress.** The ESV mentions adorning yourself "*in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control*". The NIV translates it as "*to dress modestly, with decency and propriety*". It's difficult to distinguish between these terms. The general idea is to dress with modesty whenever you assemble to worship with the church. Of course, that doesn't mean modesty is not required on the other six days of the week. But we're going to focus on the church and how we ought to behave in the church since that fits the context of Paul's letter.
  - **So he's saying to sisters in the church that if you want help people see Jesus in our corporate worship, then be careful that what you wear doesn't capture people's attention and avert their eyes away from Christ.** That would mean not wearing anything deliberately suggestive or seductive to distract your brothers in Christ. But modesty also means not wearing anything overly showy and ostentatious, that might distract even your fellow sisters in the church with thoughts of envy or comparison. It's about avoiding apparel that intends to gain attention for yourself.
- ❖ **Now I realize you don't have control over how others will react to what you wear.** So it's tempting to think it's really *their* problem. They're the ones being distracted. They're the ones taking their eyes off Jesus. Don't blame me. Don't blame women. Some would say it's sexist to put the burden on women to have to watch what they wear.

- ❖ **But that's why we have to stress that a woman's understanding of modesty has to begin with her own heart and not the opinion of others.** Just as with the brothers and how what they do with their hands in worship matters less than what's in their hearts – in the same way what's in a woman's heart is the bigger concern when it comes to modesty.
  - Sisters, ask yourself: **When I get myself ready on Sunday mornings, who am I trying to please?** Am I trying to please Jesus in the way I dress or am I hoping to gain attention for myself? If you honestly deal with that question and with your own heart before God, I don't think you'll have to worry too much about what others think. Because modesty will come natural to you.
  
- ❖ Now I realize modesty can be difficult to define. What maybe be considered immodest in one generation or culture might be considered totally appropriate in another. And that's what leads to the second thing we can say about how to adorn your beauty. **Sisters, adorn your beauty with cultural discernment.**
  - If we keep reading in v9, Paul prohibits the wearing of "*braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire*". Does that mean it's a sin for you to show up to church today with braided hair or gold earrings? **No, Paul is just making a cultural application in his day of this universal principle of modesty in dress.** There's no biblical ban on braided hair or gold and pearl jewelry. Hairstyles, jewelry and dress have different meanings in different cultures. That's why you need to apply cultural discernment.
  
- ❖ Commentators tell us that, in ancient Ephesus, there was a particular style of dress and adornment closely associated with the wealthy courtesans in Ephesian society (high-class prostitutes). Historians have learned from sculptures and coins of that time period that these courtesans wore their hair, "*in enormously elaborate arrangements with braids and curls interwoven, or piled high like towers and decorated with gems and/or gold and/or pearls.*"
  - So Paul's prohibition is simply an application of cultural discernment. **He recognizes that we don't live and worship and do church in a vacuum.** But in a culture that needs to be navigated with holiness, modesty, and self-control.
  
- ❖ Now let me add a very important qualifier. Remember that Paul is speaking here to Christian women. If he prohibits something, it's only a prohibition for believers, for members of the church. And remember the very heart behind it is to help people see Jesus. **So if a lost person that's actually trying to see Jesus shows up at church, then welcome them warmly no matter what they're wearing.** Some people have never stepped foot in a church before. They don't know what's considered modest or not. So don't apply these verses to them. There should be no prohibition or condemnation for what they wear or how they appear.
  - So remember Paul is speaking these words to the sisters of the church. **And sisters, understand that Paul's burden is for you to care more about your witness for Christ than what people think about your style and fashion sense.** It's about not laying a stumbling block for anyone and not confusing or contradicting your Christian witness by something as trivial as hairstyle or dress.

- ❖ Ladies, let me ask directly: **Is your hairstyle, jewelry, and dress intended to make much of you – to get people to come away in awe of you?** Or did you put them on this morning to make much of God? Did you adorn your own beauty as a reflection of God's?
  - **Just think of the unique beauty of the moon.** The moon has no light in itself. It's light is merely a reflection of the sun's. In a dark night sky, the moon is beautiful. It shines brilliantly. But it's merely a reflection of the sun. If you placed the two side by side, no one will be staring at the moon. All eyes would rightly be on the sun.
    - **Sister, do you want eyes on you or eyes on God?** Do you want your beauty to stand alone or do you want it to point to the beauty of Christ?
  
- ❖ Now I think we should make clear, like we did earlier, that even though this is something that women are more susceptible to (which is why Paul highlights it), it's not as if there's no applicability to men in the church. There are brothers who need to be asking themselves the same questions. Who need to test their own motives when getting ready Sunday mornings.
  - **When you come to worship together as the church, where do you want all eyes drawn?** To yourself or ultimately to God? Are you a pillar of your own beauty or a pillar of his gospel truth in Christ?
  
- ❖ Sisters, I know there's always a mix of motives in our hearts, and they're never as pure as we wish them to be. But if you honestly want to adorn yourself in such a way as to draw eyes ultimately to God – **then adorn your beauty with good works.** Let's read vv9-10 again, *"likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup>but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-with good works."*
  - **Apparently there are two types of feminine beauty: physical beauty (of the body) and moral beauty (of your character).** And Paul's point is that Christian women should adorn their moral beauty. They should be known and praised most of all for their godliness and good works – not for their clothing and appearance.
  
- ❖ The kind of good works that Paul had in mind are mentioned in chapter 5:10. There he praises the woman who has a reputation of good works. Who brings up children. Who shows hospitality. Who washes the feet of the saints. Who cares for the afflicted. Who devotes herself to every good work. **The woman of good repute adorns her beauty by what she does and not by what she wears.**
  - Think about what this means. This means beauty, as God defines it, has no correlation with youth. **But rather as you mature in the faith, as you grow in godliness, your beauty matures and ripens with age.** You can grow in beauty the older you get! That completely reorients our understanding of who are the beautiful ones among us. Sisters, strive for this kind of beauty. Be known for the good works you do and not for your wardrobe, not for your fashion sense.

- ❖ And brothers, we have a responsibility. We tend to exacerbate the problem. **We tempt our sisters towards this gender prone sin by our tendency to evaluate women based primarily on physical beauty.**
  - By our failure to recognize the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4), by not showering praise when we see beauty in the hidden person of the heart, by not appreciating moral beauty – **we leave our sisters wondering if the Bible might be mistaken on this point.** Maybe godliness is not that beautiful. Maybe it can't compete with a cute top and amazing hair.
    - Brothers, let's prove the Scriptures true. Let's show our sisters that we do see and appreciate the beauty of godliness.
  
- ❖ **Is Jesus clearly seen at HCC?** Church, let's remember what we come here for. We're here to see Jesus. To help others see Jesus. So let's not be a distraction. Let's not be an obstruction, blocking people from seeing the beauty, goodness, and truthfulness of the Savior.