***THE APPRENTICE: PAUL AND TIMOTHY MM online***

**Are you bored yet? Don’t be. What did we learn last week? Isn’t God saying, *Be still and know that I am God (Ps. 46:10)*? He’s giving us a precious commodity – time to *think.* That’s time to think about the *past* and, if necessary, repent; time to think about the *present* and draw on Him, *an ever-present help in trouble (Ps. 46:1)*; and time to think about the *future*….**

**Listen to these opening verses from Paul’s first letter to Timothy:**

**1 Tim. 1:1-3 (I’ll be quoting from many other scriptures, so follow the text that will also be posted on the Church website, www.manormissionchurch.org.uk.)**

**Now, you know about *Paul*, don’t you? He’s famous – you might even have been to his cathedral! He gives a little bit of his testimony later in the chapter:**

***I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus….I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life (vv. 13-14, 16).***

**So Paul was a wicked sinner who received God’s mercy and who then dedicated his life to displaying that mercy to others by what he said and what he did.**

**And he’s writing to a young man called Timothy – and what does he call him in v. 2? *[HIS TRUE SON]* And that’s a funny thing because *Paul* wasn’t his true dad! Now, to quote Dave (quoting Donald Rumsfeld), here’s a *known unknown*: we don’t know the name of Timothy’s *actual* father, although, unusually for the time, we *do* know the name of his *female* relations (that’s a known known!). His mother was a Christian called Eunice and his grandmother was Lois (2 Tim. 1:5). And we *do* know that his father was *Greek* and not a Jew at all.**

**So, in a way, Paul must have *adopted* Timothy – we might call him his godson – which is why he calls him his *true son in the faith.* We’re not told *why*, but we *do* know that Paul saw *potential* in Timothy. Paul met him at his home town of Lystra where Paul had had some problems, including the little matter of being stoned and left for dead (Ac. 14:19)! But Paul had had time to notice this promising young man and he’d been impressed by his faith. His mum and granny had taught him well and he says in his second letter, *I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also (1:5).* We’re told that Timothy had a good reputation with the Christians in Lystra and the next-door town of Iconium (Ac. 16:2) and, at some point, prophecies had been made about him (1 Tim. 1:18), so, when Paul - rather bravely, I think - *returned* to Lystra, where he’d been stoned, he laid hands on him in prayer (2 Tim. 1:6) and adopted him as a son and as an apprentice evangelist. Timothy left Lystra with Paul (Ac. 16:1) and we don’t know that he ever returned.**

**Now, in our tradition we don’t have godparents and godchildren although some of you *may* be godparents, nevertheless. If you *are* a godparent, you will take it seriously, won’t you? You *will* pray for your godchildren and teach them about Jesus if you can, won’t you? But we should *all* be godparents in the sense that Paul was to Timothy – we should be helping those who are younger – that’s in the faith, if not in years – to grow as Christians. Paul wrote that he wanted *to fan into flame the gift of God (2 Tim. 1:6)* in Timothy*.* If there are no young people in your family or your life, that’s no obstacle, you know. I grew up in Stanford-le-Hope with no particular Christian influences. Those were the days when you could still play ball in the street, doubtless to the annoyance of the neighbours! But there was a little old lady down that street who, instead of shouting at us and waving her fist when we played football outside her house, folded her hands in prayer. In that short street of just 22 houses, I know of at least *four* of us who were converted and *three* of us have served as evangelists. Be like Paul and see the *potential* in the Timothys around you!**

**But, be warned! There *will* be problems. This is a bit delicate, but, you see, although Timothy was a *Jew*, the son of a Jewess, he hadn’t been circumcised. Perhaps his Greek father had forbidden it – another known unknown. Paul always began his evangelism with the Jews and then moved on to the gentiles (Ro. 1:16, Ac. 14:1), so, if Timothy were going to accompany him, Paul needed to circumcise him, which he did (Ac. 16:3). That means that Timothy must have *trusted* Paul, doesn’t it? Younger Christians, can you trust your elders? Older Christians, are you making sure you are entirely trustworthy? Thank God we don’t need to wield the knife anymore, but – men and women - allow God to circumcise your *hearts* - won’t you? – and prune those bits that are unhelpful to our Christian lives (Ro. 2:29).**

**So Timothy’s training began. He couldn’t go to Bible college – Christian Bible colleges didn’t exist yet and the New Testament – the Christian bit of the Bible – hadn’t been written. In fact, two of its books are these epistles from Paul to Timothy! No, he had *vocational* training. For the next six years he lived with Paul and observed Paul and, sometimes, parted from Paul before joining him again later. That’s when he could put into practice what he saw and heard Paul do and say.**

**By the end of Paul’s letter to the Romans, he calls him, *Timothy, my fellow-worker (16:21)* and he tells the Philippians, *I have no-one else like him (2:20).* Timothy had graduated as an evangelist and a pastor and, it seems, as we read earlier (1 Tim. 1:3), that he settled down in Ephesus where he is still remembered as their first Bishop and, it is said, he was stoned to death while preaching the gospel.**

**Wow, what a man - he must have been a mighty titan of the faith! Where can *we* find young men or women like him? Well, right here, actually. By nature he was timid – Paul had to tell the Corinthians not to frighten him (1 Cor. 16:10) and Paul himself had to remind him that God had not given him *a* *spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (2 Tim. 1:7).* And he could be a bit sickly – Paul had to tell him to drink wine as well as water because of his frequent tummy troubles (1 Tim. 5:23). No, God can’t use mighty titans, but he can and does use ordinary people with all our frailties and foibles.**

**As Jesus left the earth, He knew His work wasn’t done, so He commissioned the apostles to make disciples in His name (Mt. 28:19). Later Saul was commissioned by Ananias by the laying on of hands (Ac. 9:17) and became Paul. As we’ve heard, Paul laid hands on Timothy and commissioned him. So, when Timothy died under those stones in about the year 97AD, was the job done? Of course not! That’s why Paul wrote to Timothy, *the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).* Timothy took that seriously and found other Timothys who found other Timothys who found other Timothys….who found us!**

**This is an enforced time of quietness for most of us, and, therefore, as all quiet times are, a time of *preparation.* But when the corona virus is gone, there will be much to do – too much for us alone! Who are *our* Timothys and how are we preparing *them* to make more Timothys when we – and they - have gone?**