

A MAN OF GODLINESS

1 Timothy 4:8; Dennis Ziemann Funeral; February 8, 2020

When Pastor Beck confirmed Dennis almost 75 years ago, he gave him for his Confirmation Memory Verse 1 Timothy 4:8, **“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”** For the first 17 years as a pastor I did the same thing: pick verses for the young men and women I confirmed. I always tried to choose a verse that I thought would be fitting and appropriate for each confirmand. When I placed my hand on their heads to give them the general blessing, the Scripture verse I then read was my personal blessing for them and their lives as maturing Christians in the Church. So when I was asked to preach Dennis’ Funeral Sermon based on his Confirmation verse, I couldn’t help but wonder what was going through Pastor Beck’s mind when he chose it. I don’t know, but I think he picked a good one, a verse that fit Dennis well and was appropriate for the life he lived as a Christian.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

What does St. Paul mean by “godliness”? In the verses immediately before this, he describes how Timothy needed to go into training, much like an athlete trains for a competition. And while he noted that bodily/physical training has its purpose and some value in life, training in godliness has value for this life now and for the life to come. The godliness St. Paul means comes from being trained in the **word of faith and the good doctrine** (4:6) we follow as Christians. This training of godliness for life now on earth and forever in heaven is not easy, as he notes: **For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe** (4:10).

Dennis was “a man of godliness” in this life. He **set his hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all people**, putting his faith in Jesus. His hope was in the God who became Man in Christ, who lived and died in godliness to be our Savior, and rose from the dead to declare that His victory over sin and death is ours by faith in Him. To be godly means to be trained in this word of faith and good doctrine.

In his life, Dennis toiled and strived to stay in shape as a man of godliness.

I want to be clear about this, and not undermine God's Word of life and salvation. I sometimes get the impression by things said about the deceased at funerals that God should welcome the man or woman who died into heaven because he or she was such a good person. My mother taught me that it is not polite to speak ill of the dead, but we must not confuse that with thinking that anyone is good enough to go to heaven. There is nothing sinners like us can do to earn our way to heaven. We don't even put our trust in our faith in God. Rather, in faith, we trust only in God, in Christ Jesus and what He has done for us and given to us by grace.

What I have to say about the godliness of Dennis shows how God was working in him through his faith in Jesus. For example, his desire to be in the Lord's house to hear God's Word and receive the forgiveness of sin in the Sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus was something to be commended. His children grew up with the understanding that the only question when it came to going to church on Sunday was "which service" they were attending, never "if" they were going. It might be a little ironic that he almost never went to church on Sunday later in life. Of course, he and Eunice were fixtures at our Saturday Divine Service.

Regardless of the day of the service, Dennis in faith demonstrated his agreement with the psalmist, "**O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place with Your glory dwells**" (26:9). No one is saved because he goes to church, but those who love the Lord go to church because God is there for them to save them through His holy Word and the glory of the Son's body and blood. Throughout his life Dennis continued to train in the word of faith and the good doctrine of Jesus for his godliness.

Another sign of his godliness was in how Dennis conducted business, with personal integrity and trust. I think it is easy these days to doubt and not trust, but make sure we get everything in writing before doing business. Dennis was a man with integrity; his handshake and word were enough, and he trusted others the same way.

Again, this demonstrated his faith in God, as described again in Psalm 26. The man of godliness says: **For I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering... For Your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in Your faithfulness** (26:1, 3). In faith we learn that God can be trusted to keep His Word to us, showing us steadfast love and faithfulness. A sign of our trust in God's integrity and faithfulness is shown in the godliness of our word being trustworthy, and our willingness to trust others.

Dennis' Confirmation verse noted that, **Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is** – as it is shown in our life now, trusting in God's grace through Jesus Christ and with lives of integrity toward our family, friends, and in our community – but godliness is profitable also unto **that which is to come**, eternal life with God.

As Dennis' health declined, especially this past year, one thing that was affected was the use of his right arm. I would stretch out my right hand in greeting, and he would stretch out his left. I am truly amazed at how long Eunice was able to keep him at home, where he definitely wanted to stay. She probably put off taking care of her own physical needs for his sake. Their love for each other was undeniable, a love that brought two families together as one. But love for our spouse can't finally prevent going to the nursing home. And Dennis' use of his right arm never fully recovered.

In his earlier days, Dennis was known for finding antiques and fixing them up, but he was an antique he couldn't fix. He had experienced in his life that there are some things you just can't fix. Being a man of godliness, he trusted that there are things that only God can fix. **For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.**

Dennis has passed from the **life that now is**, and his soul waits with the Lord for the **life which is to come**, trusting in God's promise that he will be raised with a perfect body like that of Jesus. **Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.** Dennis was a man of godliness. Amen.