

## **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

*“To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*

Two days prior to my moving to my last church appointment my father passed away, and two months later my mother passed. But I was blessed being able to go and spend time them. When my father received word he had lung cancer the pastor I was working with told me to go and spend some time with him. So I drove to Florida and went to spend time with my dad. We did not solve any of the world's problems; nor did we come to any startling revelations; we just sat together, father and son and we talked. We talked at home; we talked in restaurants; we talked out in his garden.

One evening while we were reminiscing about my childhood in Rhode Island I asked him a question that had eluded me for those many years. See, my father coached youth ice hockey as long as I could remember. I never remember him not coaching ice hockey. Myself, I played from age 5 until I went off to college, which was about 13 years.

My question for my father was, "why out of those 13 years did you only coach me for 3 years. He said "I coached the oldest division so until you reached that age I couldn't coach you, and besides anything I told you would go in one ear and out the other. So I stayed in the background and told your coaches what you were doing wrong and you took their words as the

gospel.” So in essence my father did coach me only from the shadows. I then asked him if he remembered the game when I was injured. He said that was one game which would be hard to forget.

It was a good game, the play went back and forth and then it happened a defining moment. A player from the other team Lance, he was moving up the ice with the puck and I came up behind him and with my stick I lifted his stick up and scooped the puck away from him and started off in the other direction, and then BAM! Lance had turned around and with two hands he broke his stick over my head. There I was, laid out on the ice, teammates around me, my mother going ballistic in the stands I found out later; a couple of my teammates were helping my father out to where I was laid out.

Think about all you could say to your child in a time like this. My father knelt down next to be and he spoke those words I have never forgotten “They Will Clap If You Get Up!” Not are you alright, or are you ok, are you hurt bad, but “They Will Clap If You Get Up!”

This morning I would like for us to focus not on the clapping or the applause but rather the act of getting up. This week I have discovered some very interesting information. Some 134 years ago as the railroad was being

built through this area one preacher from Spartanburg took it upon himself to meet a need, so he got up and came to the area on Bird Mountain to the worker's camp and conducted a revival, which started something. A few years later in 1884 another person got up and saw a need and donated two lots on N. Howard Street where a small wood frame building was built. Then in 1921 some 37 years later a group of people saw a need and began construction on a brick structure, which is still being used today. For 92 years hundreds, maybe thousands of families and people around this area have been able to come into this church building and receive a Christian foundation for their lives, all because 92 years ago some people got up and met a need.

Where would we be, where would you be, better yet what blessings would have been missed, if those men and women had not acted upon the call "they will clap if you get up." This community is blessed each and every day every time someone crosses over the threshold of this church. Now that's something to cheer about.

Then in the early 90's another group of people heard the call "they will clap if you get up" and their vision was completed in 1997 with what is now the Family Life Center. These people saw beyond these walls, they saw beyond their current financial situation and they got up and met the challenge God had set before them. They did not do this on their own the Holy Spirit preceded them, but they had to get up and follow His leading. I am convinced that when they stood up and met the challenge all of heaven cheered. As a result this church opened its doors to the community, and as a result God has richly blessed you.

I have been told one person had a vision of feeding the community and by getting up and persevering through the negativity thousands have been and continue to be fed. The same goes for the ministry, Gifts in Kind and the Bread Ministry, as well as the Back Pack Ministry. Again, because some people decided something needed to be done, they got up and did what it took and the result has been a blessing for all.

Listen again to verse 3 of our passage this morning "*We continually 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.*” What impresses me most about the Thessalonian church isn’t how hard they worked. Let’s face it there are a lot of hard working churches out there. What sets this particular congregation apart from all the others is that everything they did was motivated by faith, hope, and love. They were a faithful, loving, compassionate group of people.

I have only been here a little over 2 weeks but what I have heard I think this congregation is much like that Thessalonian congregation. It seems when people in this area need food people here get up and meet this need. And I believe this is just the tip of the iceberg. I believe this church is on the verge of an explosion of ministries beyond anything we could imagine; God size explosion of ministry.

The point I am trying to make is that when you do compassionate and loving deeds, you are being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in the world. When you are doing these things you are being the church and what it is supposed to be. Sitting here is not being the church, but working and serving the world, that’s being the church. Galatians 6:9 says “*Do good to all, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*” Many have heard the call “*They will clap if you get up*” and did just that, they got up.

Each and every week many dedicated men and women stand up and pick up food and supplies. People get up daily and do what needs to be done. The result is a strong and thriving church community. Here at Landrum UMC we have a lot to be thankful for.

How many of you have ever had an aquarium/fishbowl? What do you do with an aquarium? You just look at it. The fish, for the most part are oblivious to your looking at them – they could care less about your looking. As Christians we live in a spiritual fishbowl. The world is constantly watching us, looking at us, and examining us. They can't wait for us to mess up. But most church people are oblivious to the world watching because for the most part church people do many of the things the world would do, that's when something tragic happens. The world then sees no difference between us and them; no difference between believers and unbelievers. It's no wonder the largest growing denomination today is the unattached church. This is people not attached to any church community.

This was definitely not the case with the Thessalonians. This was a church that realized they were being watched. They gave the spectators quite a performance and the result was their reputation spread. Paul heard about their reputation, he heard about their testimony and he wrote this letter to them.

This is a lesson we need to learn. Our reputation is at stake people. The world is watching us right now. The world is watching our every move. They need to see a difference in us. They need to see a difference between us and them. They need to see a difference in Landrum UMC.

Our invitation to this community, to our community where ever you are should be “Come and See what God is doing in our lives.” Everyone has a cell phone these days, and they are useful, but a cell phone is only as good as the network it is on. In the same way, an individual Christian is only as good as the network they are on; one that connects them and challenges them through worship, fellowship, study, prayer, evangelism, and service. Connectivity is a deep-seated human need, one that the church should never ever fail to offer its neighbors.

If we are to be imitators of the Lord, our mission has to be both to the community and to the world. Not just to us located in and around this small building. Paul reminds us that the Gospel is spread not in word alone, but also in power of the Holy Spirit working through our actions. Our actions need to be God-inspired loving actions to help fill empty bellies, soothe troubles spirits, heal the sick and take the Good News to the ends of the earth as well as around the block.

The message of faithful people has to go beyond the church building to include every action and attitude that is pulsing with the saving power of God. Is your spiritual pager giving you a buzz right now? Are you hearing the call to “Get Up?”

As I come to a close I want to ask every one of you a question, young and old, and please be in prayer over your answer. My question is this, “What’s next for Landrum UMC?” Where do you see the Holy Spirit leading us? Where do you see the Holy Spirit leading you? What ministries are waiting for someone like you to “Get Up” and start? Which one of you will be the next one to stand up and start something?

Remember, “*They will clap if you get up.*” I believe when you “Get Up” and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit all of heaven cheers. Are you ready to answer the call and “Get Up?” If you are, then right where you are or here at the altar; let God know right now you are ready; ready and willing to be the next one to “Get Up.”