



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, October 16-22 (C) – 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Focus: *Faithful to our Calling*

word of life

“I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.”

2 Timothy 4:1b-2 (NRSV)

Read 2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:5

The 2nd letter to Timothy is called a pastoral letter. It gives advice and counsel from one who knows the challenges and difficulties of faithful living. The letter is addressed to Timothy, but is written to all Christians, particularly those in leadership in the church. It is filled with exhortations, words of encouragement, and advice a mentor would give to one who is new to the task.

1. *Whom do you go to for advice and counsel? Why did you choose that person?*
2. *What traits are important when considering a person in whom you confide?*

Today’s reading begins in the middle of a passage contrasting the traits of one who lives a godly life with the traits of one who deceives. In the verses which precede today’s reading, the author of 2nd Timothy offers a model of faithful living for Timothy: “Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and suffering....” (2 Timothy 3:10-11 NRSV) An admonition is then presented to Timothy: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15 NRSV) Clearly, the mentor is encouraging the recipient of this letter to choose wisely. The decision is before the reader Timothy...and before us.

3. *Describe some of the challenges of being a mentor during the first century.*
4. *How might the choices been clearer or more difficult in the first century?*

In these verses we hear the two pillars of faith which enable the follower of Christ to remain steady in the faith. The first pillar is the instruction received from those who nurtured Timothy. Remember the “...faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.” (2nd Timothy 1:5 NRSV)

5. *Describe ways the faith is shared from one generation to another.*
6. *How have you experienced this in your own life?*

The other pillar of faith is the sacred writings—the Scriptures. The words of the sacred writings are inspired by God and serve as a guidebook “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness....” (2nd Timothy 3:16 NRSV)

7. *In what ways do the Scriptures teach?*
8. *How might the Scriptures reproof, correct, and train in righteousness?*

With these foundational pillars of faith firmly in place, the author offers the most important exhortation. Its importance is emphasized as a vow – “In the presence of God and of Jesus Christ ...I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:1b-2 NRSV)

It is Timothy’s call to proclaim the message; it is the calling of pastors and lay leaders in the church; and ultimately, it is the calling of every follower of Christ.

word *among us*

Pastor Susan was visiting Dr. Smith in the hospital room. His health had been steadily declining, leading to his hospitalization. After serving as a pastor in the church for over sixty years, including as a professor of theology at the seminary, he and Pastor Susan knew that he was coming to the end of his life journey.

From early on in her ministry, Dr. Smith had always been a mentor to Pastor Susan. He taught her in seminary and advised her in her studies and in times of doubt and questions. And now, he was dying.

They talked about the church, the challenges of ministry, and their calling as pastors. It was a sacred conversation of words and silence. As their visit was ending, Pastor Susan asked Dr. Smith, “If you had to sum up in a phrase or two your understanding of the faith, what would you say?” After a moment of silent reflection, Dr. Smith – this theologian of the faith and dedicated servant and leader in the church – with a twinkle in his eyes and a steady voice answered, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

1. *Did Dr. Smith’s answer surprise you? Why or why not?*
2. *How does his answer reflect the call to Timothy urging him to “continue in what you have learned and firmly believed ... knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”? (2 Timothy 3:14-15 NRSV)*

A simple yet profound proclamation of the message that both Dr. Smith and Pastor Susan had been called to proclaim and live. A simple yet profound message of the calling to Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist and carry out your ministry fully” is still alive. (2 Timothy 4:5 NRSV) It is a calling to each of us to spread the good news of Christ and to carry out our ministries fully.

3. *What does it mean for you to carry out your ministry fully?*
4. *What opportunities do you have to spread the good news of Christ?*

faith practice *in daily life*

Proclaim the good news of Christ through word and deed

Our calling to ministry is poured over us in our baptism as the person baptizing says to the newly baptized, “Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship p. 231) It is a calling that is lived out each time we proclaim the good news of Christ through our words and actions.

In baptism, there is another calling to the sponsors and to whole community of faith: to nurture the faith of the baptized and to help the newly baptized grow in the Christian faith and life.

5. *Who might you nurture in the faith?*
6. *How do your words and actions reflect the good news of Christ?*

Prayer

Loving God, you call us to ministry through your word and the faithful proclamation of others. You have given us the will to be faithful, grant us also the strength to answer your calling for us. Amen

last word

Find ways to live out your calling.