

The Scripture we are about to read is from a letter which is entitled 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy. We will read in the first verse that the writer is Paul but there are many who believe that Paul did not actually write the letter but a close associate writing in Paul's name. I will assume for clarity today that the writer is Paul.

Paul writes this letter to Timothy. Timothy is a close associate to Paul. He is his companion and he is like a son to Paul. This letter which we are about to read is very personal. Probably the most personal of all of the letters attributed to Paul. And it is a letter which is written by Paul when he was close to the end of his life. It is a personal letter in which Paul gives Timothy wisdom in how to live since Paul does not believe he will be around much longer to provide guidance to Timothy.

### **Read 2 Timothy 1: 1-18**

Not long ago a 62 year old man in Britain was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and told that it was untreatable and that he would be dead within a year. The man decided to live as if there were no tomorrow, buying clothes and cars and cruises and traveling and eating out. In a year he ran out of money and he was bankrupt.

The only problem was that he was showing no signs of dying. So he went to his doctor, and a new series of tests were done. The new tests revealed that his condition had either improved or had been misdiagnosed in the previous year. The man was not going to die.

Well the man became outraged. He had been given a new lease on life. But rather than celebrating the new life he had been given, he was contemplating a lawsuit against his doctor.

As I mentioned before, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy is a very personal letter from Paul to Timothy in which he offers wisdom since Paul assumes he is close to death. Paul reflects on Timothy's family in this letter. He recalls Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and what great role models they were of the faith. Paul affirms how these two women taught Timothy the faith and how they lived out their faith. Paul celebrates how the faith of these women had been passed along to Timothy.

But Paul tells Timothy that he can't just live off the faith of his mother and grandmother. Paul tells Timothy that he must claim this faith for himself. He must allow his life to be his own testimony to this faith. His mother and grandmother taught him well but that he must build on what they did and claim it for himself.

I was talking with a colleague about this Scripture this week and this friend shared about what he had learned about camp fires. He shared about how he is amazed how a camp fire can be snuffed out and left to smolder. But that hours later you can stir the ashes and blow some air on the embers and put in some new wood chips and the fire can start right back up.

The potential for fire remained in the smoldering ashes all along. It had been simmering and was just waiting to be reignited. And with a little bit of movement and a little bit of added material, the dormant fire can become a warming fire once again.

Maybe in some ways you may have come into worship today feeling as though your faith journey may be like a camp fire that has been smoldering but nothing much is happening. Maybe like Timothy you too can recall people in your life who taught you the faith and were very important to you.

Maybe it was a mother or grandmother like in Timothy's life. Maybe it was another family member. Maybe it was a friend or youth leader or pastor or someone in a congregation in your past. But for some reason you feel that your relationship with God is like an old camp fire that used to burn hot but now just simmers along.

Paul gives guidance to any of us who may feel that way. He says to not be ashamed. Others are in the same place with you. Continue to place your trust in God, he says. Hold on to sound teaching. Guard the good treasure that has been placed inside of you.

In many ways the same may be said for this church. We at ACPC have 159 years of previous generations teaching us about the faith. We have lots of Lois' and Eunices. Those women and men who guided this church through floods and tornadoes and church splits. Many who were saints and some who were just pains in the you know what. Some whose names you may know but many you may not know.

The Session of ACPC feels that in many ways this church is a smoldering fire that is ready to burst into a blazing flame of new vision and ministry. You see on the front of the bulletin the new vision which they have adopted. Next week in worship you will hear and experience the many ways that the Session is feeling the Spirit is calling this church forward.

You will hear members of the church share about their vision for a new entrance area, you will hear about the new signage which is going on outside, you will hear about the new ideas for men's and women's ministry which are being initiated. You will hear about the facility upgrades that need to be done if this church is to continue to expand its ministry in this community and around the world. And you will hear why you should invest your time and your money into the people that make up ACPC.

This church has been blessed with a rich tradition of very faithful folks. You personally may have been blessed with a rich tradition of very faithful folks in your own life. You may have come from a family and a tradition which lacked very faithful role models.

But one way to celebrate being the church which is called ACPC is that this is a place which welcomes all and each one's faith journey.

Whether you have a bunch of Eunices and Lois in your background or whether you feel as though you are an orphan in the faith, in this place we are invited to come together and share in a faith journey with one another. AMEN.

+++++

-Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 4, p. 137

-Given: Oct. 6, 2013 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)