

Living with Gratitude



“Living with Gratitude - Thank Your Elders”

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, October 5–6, 2019

All Services

The Reverend Elizabeth E. Frey
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

2 Timothy 1:1-14

It's a Sunday afternoon in the early 1990s. A little girl meticulously spreads stuffed animals and baby dolls on the living room floor. She pulls a piano bench out into the middle of the floor in front of the tv. She runs to the kitchen to rummage for a loaf of white bread – it might be sliced, but who cares. She fills a cup with water – because the kids aren't allowed to have drinks in the living room – so this was the best she could do. She sets the bread and the cup on the piano bench, just like Pastor did this morning in church. And sitting beside the bread and the cup is the green *Lutheran Book of Worship*. If you haven't already noticed, the living room is prepared as if it were a church. The stuffed animals and dolls are the congregation and maybe you guessed, that little girl – me - was their pastor.

This was a regular scene at the Frey house. Baby dolls were baptized, hymns were sung, and communion was celebrated. Why anyone was surprised that I became a pastor is beyond me? On Sunday mornings as a child, I would soak in all that was happening around me, noticing the details so I could replicate it at home. I loved bringing church home. I loved making church my own. I loved praising God. I didn't know it at the time, and it took years for me to realize that it was in these living room church moments that God was calling me to become a pastor. So, thank you, God for Mom and Dad who made sure we got to church almost every Sunday and who shared their enormous faith me and my brother.

In our reading from 2 Timothy today, Paul is writing a letter to his friend and mentee Timothy, who was a leader in the church. Sadly, we know so little of what is going on in the background of this letter. We have no idea what is going on in Timothy's life, but it seems that it was something difficult and draining; it was something causing him to doubt his call in God's church.

This letter – like so many of Paul's letters – are what I like to call “cheerleader letters.” Paul uses these letters to cheer on his friends far away, to inspire them to action for God's church and the gospel. In this letter, Paul writes: “I am reminded of your sincere

faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure lives in you." Paul uses the examples of Timothy's mother and grandmother to encourage him, to remind him of the awesome gift of faith in his life. Paul wants Timothy to remember the roles and influence these women had in his life of faith.

So, this brings us to our theme for the day, *Thank Your Elders*. Who is a Lois or a Eunice in your life? Who are the people who shared God's love with you? Who brought you to church or who invited you to be a part of the church? Who taught you about the awesomeness of God? They might be your parents. They might be a pastor. They might be friends. Thank you, God for the people who share your love with us!

In addition to my parents, I had several loving, wonderful people like Lois and Eunice in my life at church. In fact, it's lovely that this reading came up now because a couple of weeks ago, I returned to my home church in Lancaster to celebrate the retirement of our pastor, someone who was a Lois or a Eunice in my life. Pastor Strause was the pastor to that church, Emmanuel Lutheran for over 30 years. He was the pastor that baptized me, confirmed me, and just over a year ago, sponsored me at my ordination. To say that he was a big part of my discernment process toward becoming a pastor would be an understatement. I played church in the living room because I saw what God was doing through him on Sunday mornings and I wanted to be a part of that! Thank you God for Pastor Strause.

Another Lois in my life and quite literally, because her name was Lois, was my 7th and 8th grade Sunday School teacher. At 9am every Sunday morning, my classmates and I would gather around a small table with her, and for two years, we would read the bible out loud, verse by verse, from Genesis to Revelation. Now let me tell you, for a 13-year-old, this was the most boring thing to do on a Sunday morning, but I can stand up here and say I have read the whole bible cover to cover because of her. She thought it was important for us to read God's Word and so we did. Thank you, God for Lois.

In addition to Lois was her husband, Harry. Harry always had Wrigley's Double Mint gum in his suit jacket on Sunday morning. And after church, he would be surrounded by the children of Emmanuel Lutheran as we each stuck out our hand for a piece of gum. Now maybe this seems insignificant to you, but a piece of gum after church was the gospel for this kid. In that piece of gum and the smile that came with it, I experienced God's love and so did every other kid in that church. Thank you, God for Harry.

So, friends, who is a Lois in your life? Who is a Eunice? Take a few moments. Imagine their faces and how their gift of faith touched your life. Because in a few moments, we are going to thank God for those folks. I'm going to say, "Thank you, God for..." and I want you to respond with the name of that person.

“Thank you, God, for...”

How amazing is it that God gives us people like them in our lives – literal gifts of faith - and how awesome is it when we get to share their gifts with others? Because not only does Paul want Timothy to give thanks for Lois and Eunice, Paul wants Timothy to share what Lois and Eunice have given him. Did you notice all the “gift” language in this reading? “Rekindle *the gift* of God...” “God gives us...” “This grace was given to us...” “Guard the good treasure *entrusted* to you...” Like Timothy, we have been given so many gifts – from God and from those Loises and Eunices in our lives, but those gifts don’t stop with us. Like Timothy, we are called to share those gifts with others. We are called to pass them along – to be a Lois or a Eunice in the lives of others.

Look around you. There are younger Christians – children - in this church who need as many Loises and Eunices in their lives as possible. How can you share the gift that you have been given with them? It’s so simple. Welcome them into this place! Show them how much God loves them! Encourage them to praise God! Invite them to be part of this church!

Because when we share these gifts with kids, they want to be here! They want to be a part of this awesome family of God! They want to share this gift with others!

There was once a little girl who loved church so much that she took it home with her; she played church and then, she became a pastor. Today, there is a little girl in our church who goes home and sings “This is the Feast” at the top of her lungs because she has been given this gift. She loves God and she loves church! There is another little girl who is over the moon excited to become a new greeter at Trinity; she told me last week, “I get to help people!” She has been given a gift and she wants to share it!

So today, we give thanks for those who have given us this gift of faith. But we leave this place knowing that it doesn't end with us. We say “thank you” when share that gift, when we give it to every person we meet. How awesome is our God! How awesome are the people who shared God's love with us! And how awesome is it that we get to give that gift to others! Thanks be to God! Amen.

Copyright © 2019, Elizabeth E. Frey. All rights reserved



www.trinitycamphill.org