



## “Living with Gratitude: Follow the Map”

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Saturday & Sunday, October 19–20, 2019

All Services

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2 Timothy 3:14–4:5; Luke 18:1-8

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

The fall of the year that I was twenty, I wasn't certain what I wanted to do with my life. I had completed two years of college, where I had managed to become a rather self-important person - in my own mind, at least. I spent the previous summer at Yellowstone National Park, where I worked in the housekeeping department and cleaned the cabins around Old Faithful Lodge. I also served as a summer student minister with a program called “A Christian Ministry in the National Parks.” I had enjoyed that experience so much, I decided to take a year off college and continue doing ministry with them.

So that fall, I found myself driving across the country, from Illinois to Nevada, in my 1958 Ford F100 pickup (his name was Patrick). It had no radio; the speedometer didn't work; and the driver's door would only stay shut if it was locked. But I was twenty. I was invincible. And I had my father's advice to guide me:

*“Don't do anything stupid, like getting married.”*

Which, looking back on it now as a father myself, I think it is rather sound advice for a twenty-year-old, unemployed, college drop-out.

I knew I had time. All I had to do was go wherever the road was going to lead. I didn't have a plan. I didn't *need* a plan. So, *what* if I didn't have my life mapped out. I knew what I was doing. Was a plan, a map, really all important, after all?

But did I, really, know what I was doing?

I did, eventually, after a year, go back to school and get a degree. A degree, by the way, that was sought after by so *many* corporations, that in order to be fair to all of them, I had to say “no” to each of them, and instead went to work selling shoes for JCPenney for two years. because my foundation in Religion / Biblical Studies made me such *prime employment material* for the corporate world.

I am not about to admit publicly that I *might* have, *possibly*, lost my way . . . but it seems like it took me a while to “get on track.”

I think, in a lot of ways, this letter to Timothy is a lot like that advice my dad gave to me.

The author was reminding Timothy of his roots, his foundation. He was encouraging Timothy to remember what his mother and grandmother had taught him. That's what the author means when he writes in verse 14:

*<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, (2 Timothy 3:14)*

He learned his faith from family.

I think that's what this letter to Timothy is about: it's a verbal, and spiritual, reminder of his foundation, to help show him the way of the cross; in order to prompt him of whose he is, and *what* he is called to be.

Much like my father's advice, the author then punches the point home a few verses later:

*I solemnly urge you: <sup>2</sup> proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. . .<sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. (2 Timothy 4:1c-2, 5)*

In other words,

*It's not going to be easy, Timothy, and there will be times when things are just not going your way. But you have a map; - keep going; you'll get through it. You already know the way.*

And the author ties it all together, reminding Timothy of what that foundation is, with verse 16:

*<sup>16</sup> All scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16)*

What I love about verse 16, is that when we look at it in the originally Greek, we get literally:

*All scripture is God-breathed.*

What an image! Scripture is *God-breathed*.

What is Breath, but a sign of *life*, of *living*. Like in Genesis chapter 2, when God **breathed life** into the newly created humans. God is *inside us*. Scripture is living, breathing, inside of each of us.

Scripture can be our guide, our map, **IF** we stop fighting against what God is telling us. Because that's what we all do - **we** want to tell God what is the right thing for us to be doing.

And that map, that guide, is *different* for each of us, regardless of our age. We aren't **all** called to be pastors, or doctors, or mechanics, or farmers. Each of us has a different map; some other path; a separate plan. We are all called, though, by virtue of our baptism, to *Stop* striving to tell God that we know what to do, at least about our spiritual needs.

We need to *Stop* wanting to show God that we know the best way, the easiest route. Because we don't, not really.

Last week I asked you, *how do we receive God's mercy?* One of the ways we do that, is we follow God's map. We stop our daily struggle against God. We *allow* God to *breathe* the Word into our very beings.

We strive to come into the presence of God, seeking healing, seeking forgiveness; to forgive others, and to forgive ourselves. We come seeking guidance. We come, seeking direction. We come, seeking God.

Follow the map.

Amen.

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