

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 16, 2022

Old Testament Reading; Jeremiah 31: 27-34

Responsive Reading; Psalm 119: 97-104

Epistle Reading; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Gospel Reading; Luke 18: 1-8

Sermon Title: **Continue in the Things Which You Have Learned**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; This is not your first rodeo, so ask boldly and live justly.

I love how our Epistle Lesson starts out. This is Paul speaking to Timothy.

Earlier in this letter Paul refers to the teaching in faith that Timothy has received from his grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice and how that faith had been instilled in him. Timothy also had the benefit of the teachings of his mentor, Paul.

Now Paul says, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Think about this. As an elderly congregation, can't you imagine these words being spoken directly to us?

Almost all of us (if not all of us) have grown up in Christian homes and churches. We have had the benefit of being taught the lessons of life and love of Christ from wonderful role models.

Like Timothy, we do not have to be won over to Christ, but rather encouraged to take what we have learned and run with it. Ensuring the next generations might have the same opportunities as we have had to grow in Christ.

It almost sounds like Paul is describing the conditions and duties of the 21st century as opposed to the 1st century.

We must be ready in season and out of season to reflect the teachings of Jesus. Many a time, I have been hurrying to the dining room or a meeting and I will say, “How are you today?” to a resident and they will answer with a concern that is on their mind. Even if I'm in a hurry, I must stop and hear them out. This is what Jesus would do and this is what Jesus expects

of me. As the Manor House pastor, it is not my only job to preach on Sunday. It is not my job to only talk the talk from the pulpit on Sunday, it is my job to listen the listen in the hallway on Tuesday afternoon. This is what Paul was telling Timothy, and this is what he is telling each and every one of us today.

The understanding of Christianity is not exclusively the job of the religious leaders (that did not work to well for the Hebrews), but rather Christianity is the ministry of the believers. Believe it or not it means more coming from you than it does coming from someone who gets paid to say it.

Not only are the present duties the same but so are the conditions. Paul warns, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." Paul could have also said, "They will take prayer out of school and the Ten Commandments out of the courtroom because it might offend someone." And on and on and on. If prayer cannot be in school or the Ten Commandments in the court room it the job of us old fogies to make sure these things are in the hearts of continuing population.

In our Old Testament lesson Jeremiah tells his constituents that there will be a new sheriff in town. The new sheriff will be a

new covenant that will be different from the one they got from Moses. In the new covenant salvation will not be determined by what you do for God but by God's grace that has been given for us. We will no longer be responsible for the wrongs done by our forefathers, but only for our own actions. Jeremiah also says that the day is coming when we will be introduced to God and we should all know Him personally. Spoiler alert! That would be the coming of Jesus and we should all know about it because it has been recorded and verified. We can all know God (through Jesus) from the greatest to the least.

Religion is man's search for God and Christianity is God revealing Himself to man in the form of His son Jesus Christ. There is no searching for God in Christianity. He is right there in front of our eyes.

Once you know Jesus on a personal basis your joy is made complete and you can echo the Psalmist and say, "Oh how I love your law. Knowing you makes me wiser than the Old Testament teachers and makes me want to do your will. Not out of fear but out of love for you. Your words are sweeter to my mouth than honey. Gosh, I love you so much that I want to avoid every false way."

Finally, Jesus tells we can pray with great confidence. He uses the example of the unjust judge being persuaded to help the widow because of her persistent bugging him for help. This is

not to say we should bug God this is to say if bugging an unjust judge will finally get results think of how much quicker you will get results praying to our loving Father and Savior.

In our Gospel, Jesus ends this reading with a very provocative question. Jesus asks, “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

God has given us every reason to believe and to have a deep abiding faith. The real question is will we do it? I join Joshua, in saying for myself and hopefully for you, “As for me and my family we will follow the Lord.”

Let us all join Joshua in total faith and dedication and, “Ask boldly and live justly!”

Hallelujah and Amen!