

A Legacy of Faith: A Mother's Gift

preached by Rev. Paul Sakasov on May 12, 2019

2 Timothy 1:1-3, 5, 14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, 2 To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 I am grateful to God - whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 5 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. 14 Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

One day four ministers stood talking and, as so often happens, the conversation soon drifted to shop talk. “I prefer the King James Version of Scripture,” said one, “for its eloquent use of the English language.” A second minister gave forth that no Bible could match the New American Standard for its faithfulness to the original Greek and Hebrew text. “That may well be,” said the third, “but I prefer the New International Version for its contemporary language and easy readability.” There was a thoughtful period of silence, and then the fourth minister said, “I like my mother’s translation best.” It was with some surprise that the others said: “We didn’t know that your mother had translated the Bible.” “Yes, she did,” he replied. “She translated it into her daily life, and it was through her translation that I came to faith.”

Today, as we thank God for our mothers I thought it fitting to reflect on a story from Scripture that features two mothers: Lois, who was the grandmother of Timothy, and Eunice who was Timothy's mother. While their names are only mentioned in passing in the Scriptures, their legacy is well attested to in the Bible.

Turning to God’s Word for the details of their story and their legacy, Lois, a woman of faith, had a daughter named Eunice and she imparted her strong faith to her daughter. Eunice then had a son named Timothy and both grandmother and mother imparted their strong faith within him. Timothy then met a father figure, a mentor, a giant of the faith, Paul, who noticed the gifts that he possessed and Paul chose him to be his successor in ministry.

In fact, Paul was so impressed with Timothy’s faith and promise as a leader in the church that Paul refers to Timothy as a co-sender of six of his letters. Paul also spoke highly of Timothy in his letter to the Philippians. So confident was Paul of

Timothy's faith that, in his first letter to Timothy, he called Timothy, "my true son in the faith."

Thus, Timothy became for Paul the inheritor of his mission. In Paul's final letter to Timothy, written near the end of his life, he speaks without reserve, calling Timothy, "my beloved child." For in Timothy, Paul, who was not married and had no children, found a "descendant," who would boldly walk in his footsteps and bear his mantle.

However, before Timothy could bear such a mantle, before he could leave such a powerful legacy, he needed to be grounded in a strong faith that was compelling enough to attract the attention of one of the most influential men in history. And this foundation that he needed to become the man whom God intended him to be was provided to him by his mother and his grandmother.

As we read in our reading for today, Paul, in essence said: "Timothy, I know your grandmother, and her faith is sincere. It is the same faith I have observed in your mother, and after having watched you all this time I am convinced of your faith also." Another way of saying this is that Lois and Eunice imparted an authentic faith to Timothy, or literally translating the adjective Paul uses in today's reading they passed on a faith which is, "without hypocrisy."

So, this is the legacy that Scripture tells us that Timothy received from his grandmother and mother. And, like the preacher who was nurtured by his mother's translation of the Bible, Timothy, too, received the Word of God by watching his mother and grandmother in action. And each day that he watched them he saw through the words that they spoke and through the way that they lived their lives what it means to possess an authentic faith. Each day as he watched his mother and grandmother he saw what it means to live with a faith that is completely genuine, sincere, and free from all hypocrisy.

And this is how Scripture tells us that Lois and Eunice built a legacy that is still being felt today; by being a mother, and a grandmother of faith! Now who would have guessed that anyone could have changed the world by doing something that seems so ordinary.

And yet they did. Even though they were not the heads of state, or commanders of armies, builders of economic empires or great scientific minds, they changed the world. And the way they did it was by living an authentic faith in the presence of

their offspring.

Now this is a great story! For in it we clearly see the profound positive effect a mother's love and a mother's faith can have on their child and on the world. To emphasize this point, I am reminded of a piece of trivia I recently read. According to William Frederick Dunkle Jr., France had sixty nine kings. Of those sixty nine kings, only three were really loved by their subjects. And what made those three kings stand out from the others? Apparently the three kings who were loved by the people were the only kings of the sixty nine who were raised by their mothers instead of by tutors or guardians. Wow!

So, Moms, this means that you are far more important than you know. While its true that your children will likely not grow up to be kings of France, or heirs of Paul's apostolic ministry, none the less, they will grow up to have influence. They will touch lives. In their families. In their communities. In the places where they work. Moms, your everyday, ordinary work is important.

As Paul reminds Timothy, he owes much to his mother and grandmother. For they not only embodied the Word of God, they also taught him the Word of God making the Scriptures known to him from the time of his infancy. Thus, Paul, as part of his instruction to his ministry successor, reminds him, in chapter three of his second letter to Timothy, to hold fast to the teachings that he has already received from his mother and grandmother. As Paul writes, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

Immediately after these words, Paul tells Timothy, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Again, in these well quoted words, Paul is reaffirming to his spiritual son to hold onto the words that he has been instructed with by his mother and grandmother since the time he was a young boy. Paul is telling him that the Scriptural foundation he has received growing up is to form the moral compass of his life and it is to be the moral compass that guides his teaching and leadership within the Church of Christ.

All this to say that this story keeps coming back to the gift Timothy received from his mother and grandmother. And had there been Mother's Day in the first

century Timothy would have given them the highest accolade that could be given any mother or grandmother on Mother's Day by saying to them, "You gave me authentic, sincere, genuine faith with no hypocrisy!" And had he been standing around with the other ministers comparing thoughts on Bible translations, he would have been the one that said, "I like my mother's translation best." "For she translated it into her daily life, and it was through her translation that I came to faith."

That being said, not all of us are Timothys and not all our mothers are Loises and Eunices. In the real world, most of us fall short of the standards to which we aspire and to which others hope that we will achieve.

Notwithstanding, on this Mother's Day, we have much for which we can give thanks to God. We have many reasons for which we can give thanks for our mothers. Even if all they have given us is the gift of life itself, we have reason to be grateful.

However, for most of us, I imagine we can easily come up with a significantly bigger list of things for which we are grateful. For most of us, we can easily come up with a list of the positive ways our mothers have influenced us and helped us to become the people that we are today.

So, on this Mother's Day, let us thank God for our mothers. Let us thank God for the way mothers reveal the heart of God to us. Let us thank God for the support mothers have been to us over the years. Let us thank God for the way mothers have shaped our character. Let us thank God for the way mothers have helped us discover our passions. Let us thank God for the way mothers have guided us through the mysterious paths of life. Let us thank God for the incredible gift of mothers.

And as we do so, let us make every effort to honour our mothers, as the fifth commandment instructs us to do. Let us give them the respect they deserve. Let us show them the love that they have showed us. Let us serve them in the way they have served us. Let us be proud of them in the same way that they have always been proud of us and our achievements. Let us honour them for all they have done and continue to do. Let us honour them for it is right, and it is pleasing in the eyes of the Almighty. On this Mother's Day let us honour our mothers as we give thanks to God for this incredible gift that he has given us.