



This sermon series uses the image of a tree, from seed to sprout, to sapling, to fruit bearing and back to seedling for the next generation. As First Church ends 2019, we have the opportunity to look ahead to 2020 praying and working for a new vision, a new way of being in ministry at Third and Broadway. The year 2020 will be our 150th anniversary. Being good stewards of the gifts of those who have gone before us, means that those who follow us will have the resources available for years to come. Our tithes and gifts mean the daily, weekly and monthly ministry (and the bills that come with those ministries) are funded. We celebrated All Saints and remembered and gave thanks for the fruits of their faith and lives. As we think about those fruits, we also are challenged to consider the fruit of our lives. How are we bearing fruit in the name of Christ? How are we sharing that fruit with others? Next week we will return our estimate of giving cards. This card shares our intention to support the ministries of First UMC with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. This week may our lives bear fruit and witness to our faith in Christ.

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **"Celebrating the Fruits"**

Daily prayer: *O God, our source in all things, you have showered us with blessings. Help us to be rooted and established in your Word and your love so that we may be like trees planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season. Pour out your spirit on us as your people and guide us in our praying, serving, giving and living. May we offer the best of our lives and gifts out of our faith in Jesus; it's in Christ's name we pray, Amen.*

This week's sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, November 4, 2019 Hebrews 12: 1

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews lists names that those familiar with the Hebrew scriptures (the one we often call the Old Testament) would recognize. Those who went before were faithful to their calling in God and they were faithful even though they had not seen the fulfillment of the promise of God. In the words of the author, "...that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect." Some how God is not content with only some being part of the kingdom, God wants everyone to be part of that great reign of justice and peace. Their fruits changed lives and hearts, just as the saints we named yesterday, or those one we remember hearts make a real difference through their talents, their gifts, their faith and their love. Those who have gone before are surrounding us. *List your saints and the fruits that gave witness to their lives and their faith. What fruits have you received from and how does that help you share the fruit of your faith with others and with the church?*

Tuesday, November 5, 2019 2 Timothy 3: 14-17

2 Timothy points out that scripture is to encourage and inspire believers to do "good work" in the name of God. Scripture is to help people of faith be strengthened for good in the world. God's children are called to love God and love others and to feed, clothe, house, and make the world more like the reign of peace and righteousness that Jesus promised. *How does scripture inspire you to be more faithful, more loving and more just? How does scripture inspire you to good works in the name of Christ? As you consider the fruits of your life and spirit, how do they represent your faith in Christ and how can you bear more fruit in Jesus' name?*

Wednesday November 6, 2019 Luke 18: 18-22

This story is told in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The last two weeks we have focused on the two parables in the eighteenth chapter, the diligence of the widow and Jesus encouraging us to pray and the one about assumptions as to who is holy and who is not. After Jesus blesses the children, a rich young ruler comes up and asks about eternal life and he is already doing what he is supposed to do: follow the commandments. Jesus either seeing something or hearing something in this young man who wants more and encourages this young ruler to sell everything and follow him. This is never an easy encounter to read. *Do you identify with the rich young man? Do you also do what is right, but are hungry for something more, something deeper in your spiritual life?*

Thursday November 7, 2019 Luke 18: 22-24

This "poor" rich young ruler is given a choice that seems so impossible. Give up everything and follow Jesus, be part of the disciples or continue his life the way it has always been. His life has a certainty about it, but following Jesus had no road map, no real sense of a future. The rich young ruler chose what he knew, what was secure. All sorts of possibilities were laid before him, but he was not willing to risk it all. This young man was already "religious", already "spiritual" he didn't need to do anything else. This story points to a place deep within this rich young ruler that was ready and curious about a deeper relationship with God. If the rich young ruler's wealth was something between him and God, what keeps you from going deeper with God? *As you ponder your estimate of giving for 2020, is God challenging you to give more of your life, your time, your treasure your finances?*

Friday November 8, 2019 Luke 18: 26-30

These words of Jesus are ones that many love to hate, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God." So many sermons and devotions have been written about how this is not literal, but figurative. In many senses that is true, Jesus did not hate or dislike people who were wealthy or rich. It was wealthy women that often keep his ministry going. I think for Jesus, the issue is always what people are willing to give up to follow him, or to love God with all their hearts, minds and spirits and to love their neighbor as they love themselves. It is always in the justification that Jesus challenges people. If they say they follow the Law, Jesus is fine with that, but when they want more, more praise, more validation, more faith, then Jesus challenges them. What do you want more of? In following Jesus can you offer more of your love, your time, your treasure, your gifts, your service? What are you willing to do in order to commit more of yourself to God? *As we prepare for our consecration Sunday, pray for yourself and for our community of faith, that our gifts might support our ministry and mission for 2020. Return your estimate of giving card on Sunday as we celebrate our own lifecycle of giving.*