



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 Street 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 are all at different stages of our growth in our walk with Christ, but each of those stages have gifts to share. Often growth comes from difficulty. Paul reminds Timothy that growth takes time whether one is a soldier, or a farmer or an athlete. Perseverance and prayer encourage us to hold fast and work toward the reign of God. This week may you feel God's strength comfort and love in an adversity you may face.

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **"Encouraging Growth and Faith"**

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, October 21, 2019 2 Timothy 2: 1-2

In the first part of this letter, Timothy is encouraged to remember those who planted the seeds of faith in him (his mother and grandmother) and those who nourished the faith in him (Paul with the laying on of hands.) Timothy is to guard this faith as a treasure. Paul has spoken of suffering and wants Timothy to know that being faithful is not always easy. Strength is given through faith in Christ. Paul points to himself as an example and witness and he wants Timothy to do the same. All things grow; seeds grow into seedlings or saplings and then begin to deepen their roots and grow stronger. In terms of faith, growing is not always done through ease. Our faith is deepened when we lean into our relationship with Christ. *How have you experienced a deepening relationship with Christ in the midst of difficulty?*

Tuesday, October 22, 2019 2 Timothy 2: 3-7

Paul uses three images: a soldier, a farmer and an athlete. These three different kinds of jobs all require discipline and faith. A farmer places faith in the seed, the field, in the weather and in God. A soldier places their faith in their commander, in the knowledge of their particular job and in God. An athlete places faith in their coach, teammates and in God. All must work through particular drills and skills to complete their tasks. There may be a great deal of suffering in the work, in the disciplines they practice and in the long days and nights as they perfect their skills. According to Paul, they will, we will, and Timothy will grow in understanding. There is a bigger picture that we cannot always see. Suffering encourages growth. In the twenty-first century suffering is avoided at all costs. Discipline in any sport or activity like music or dance is necessary to succeed and to master skills. There will be sore muscles, fatigue and frustration. Being faithful is the same. Those who went before suffered, often gave to the point of difficult because they believed that it mattered. *In what ways do you discipline yourself in terms of faith? How do you serve in ways that require you to stretch yourself mentally, spiritually and financially?*

Wednesday October 23, 2019 2 Timothy 2: 8-10

Paul says he is suffering so others can experience salvation in Christ. God's word cannot be imprisoned or stopped. Paul is willing to suffer, to be imprisoned so that others may grow and flourish in the faith. Suffering for Paul is not a hardship when it means others are learning and growing in the faith and the church is expanding as well. We sometimes use the word "growing pains" when our bodies are changing or when organizations are changing. Growth is not easy but essential as we consider the lifecycle of giving. *As we look to the future, where might our growing pains be found? How might we choose to feel some discomfort in order to share the good news of Christ?*

Thursday October 24, 2019 Luke 18: 1-5

A widow and a judge are the heart of this story. Widows, women period, did not receive much, if any, respect. Widows, if they had no family or male relations to help them, particularly felt the sting of being ignored. This widow was looking for justice from a judge who could care less. He only hears her case because he is tired of the bother. In today's terms, "nevertheless she persisted." The seeds of justice were planted in the widow and even when she met with stubbornness and a refusal to be heard, she did not stop. As people of faith, seeds are planted and nurtured. Life is not always easy, sometimes it is hard and an uphill battle, but if we cling to the faith, we will be strengthened to do what is right, just and good. *How do you, like the widow, persevere when times are difficult?*

Friday October 25, 2019 Luke 18: 6-8

Jesus, reflecting on this parable, says that God will provide justice. Now it is not hard to find examples where justice is not happening, where the unjust seem to win and those who are needy, afraid and seemingly powerless are overcome. Jesus challenges our faithfulness. *How are we nurturing the seeds of faith and encouraging the growth of faith through our lives and actions? How do we work and act on that faith as good stewards of what we have been given? Today list one or two things you can do through the faith you have been given to work toward justice and the kingdom of God.*