



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. On Sunday we returned our estimate of giving cards. These expressions of the fruits of our lives are what help us build a “budget” for next year. These cards are important as we praise God for our blessings, pray for the ministries of our church and plan for the mission and ministry for the next year for both the General Budget and the Downtown Alive TV ministry. The seed of faith is planted and being nurtured, now is the time for us to share in the harvest and give back to God out of our abundance.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Harvesting Faith: Sharing the Good News and Our Gifts”**

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.*

Study Guide

Monday, November 11, 2019 2 Timothy 2: 6-7

Today is Veterans Day in our country. We pause to remember those soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in times of war and peace. There are also those who give their lives during war and conflicts who do not bear weapons, but instead are medics, are communication specialists and others who do their best to alleviate the suffering of the soldiers and the innocent who have been hurt or killed. Paul writes in his letter to Timothy that he has “fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith.” As Christians we do not glorify war or violence, but we can honor sacrifice and the deep ethics of those who serve their country with honor and commitment. Faith encourages sacrifice and giving, not just the easy kind, but the kind of generosity that gives with a whole heart and life. *Today, remind yourself of those sacrifices others have made, in your family, among your friends and acquaintances. Say a prayer that you can also live a sacrificial life pointing to the grace and love you have received in Christ.*

Tuesday, November 12, 2019 Luke 19: 1-7

This story is so familiar. Many learned it by singing “Zacchaeus was a wee little man; a wee little man was he!” Scripture doesn’t actually say whether it was Zacchaeus or Jesus that was “small of stature” only that Zacchaeus couldn’t see and climbed the sycamore tree to see Jesus. The song ends with Jesus going to Zacchaeus’ house and it sounds so happy and wonderful. But scripture shows that most were unhappy about what transpired between Jesus and Zacchaeus. After all he was a hated tax collector and a “sinner.” Tax collectors worked for Rome and were rich because they made sure they got their share on top of what Rome required. Tax collectors were cheats, liars and traitors. No wonder the crowd grumbled. Why should Zacchaeus be singled out and honored? In our society both the rich and the poor are vilified. *How do we find ways to speak about money and about generosity without drawing lines? How are our lives and our generosity witnessing to our faith in Christ?*

Wednesday November 13, 2019 Luke 19: 8-10

In response to Jesus, Zacchaeus offers half of what he has to the poor and to those he has cheated he will repay four times! Scripture asks for voluntary restitution of what has been taken to be returned plus 20 percent. Compulsory restitution is the original amount doubled. It can come to four times the amount, but not usually. In response to Jesus, Zacchaeus is doubling the voluntary restitution and offering not a tithe, but 50 percent of what he has to the poor. Jesus proclaims that salvation has come. Zacchaeus is an amazing witness to the power of Jesus to change lives. His generosity is more than time or talent, it is reflected in his offering of his money. Zacchaeus is sacrificing much in response to Jesus’ grace and love. *In our Life Cycle of Giving, where is Zacchaeus? How did the seed of faith that was planted by Jesus move so quickly to an offering of fruit? As you look at your own lifecycle of giving how do you respond to Jesus through your time, talent, tithe and treasure?*

Thursday November 14, 2019 2 Timothy 4: 1-5

Paul has some final words for Timothy. Paul is encouraging Timothy to stand firm in the faith, to root himself deeply in Christ, so that when the storms come, when trials come, he will be able to endure it all and continue to witness to Christ Jesus. “Preach the word, in season and out of season.” Sometimes that is hard for people, to remain faithful no matter what is happening. These words are Paul’s way of saying don’t give up, stay strong, know that God is with you and continue to serve. Generosity is not just about money or finances it is also about our hearts and spirits. Being patient and keeping control of ourselves means we can be a people rooted in Christ, giving of the whole of ourselves in doing the work of God in the world. Our estimate of giving card is but a symbol of our commitment to Christ and to our particular community of faith. *How do you hold fast to the work you are called to do “in and out of season.” How do you root yourself in Christ in order to be part of the fruitfulness of the believers and the harvest of faith?*

Friday November 15, 2019 2 Timothy 4: 6-9

Paul is nearing the end of his life and faithfully pours himself out for Timothy and the church itself. You might want to read verses 10-22 as the poignancy practically leaps off the page. “Do your best to come to me quickly.” Paul is alone and feels deserted but not his faith. He leans into Christ as his strength. Paul has sacrificed regularly because he knows that God is good and faithful. Our sacrifices make a path for others to follow. We share our financial gifts so we can reach out beyond our doors to share the love and grace of Christ to everyone. *Today, pray for our community of faith, pray for our young people and for those we reach through our television ministry. Pray that we each might sacrifice for the good of all.*