

“Who are you mentoring?” A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
October 20, 2019, Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:5

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Why are you sitting here today? No, I don't mean because you got up, drove here, and walked up the ramp. For many of you sitting here today there was someone in your life that instilled in you the value of attending church regularly, that instilled in you your faith, an individual you can name that helped you along on your faith journey. Who was that individual or, perhaps, individuals? For me, it was my mother. What about you?

Just a bit of background on today's reading and the readings we've been hearing for the past few Sundays. First and Second Timothy and Titus (which we haven't read) are letters from Paul talking about ministry and encouraging both Timothy and Titus in their ministries. These three books are called the 'pastoral epistles.' Epistle is a churchy name for a letter. The letters included in the New Testament, written by the disciples to churches and individuals, are referred to as epistles.

When we read from these letters to Timothy – as I just did – we have the privilege of peeking over Timothy's shoulder learning what Paul believes important to being a good pastor. There's wise advice and counsel in Paul's letters, advice I take to heart as a pastor.

Today, I'd like for us to look at the bigger picture presented in this reading. The bigger picture? Paul was a mentor who was mentoring Timothy.

What is a mentor? Mentor: an experienced and trusted advisor. Mentoring means to advise or train, especially a younger person or a less experienced person.

When I started at this church ten years ago, the Presbytery provided me with a mentor, an experienced pastor that I could talk with and ask for advice. Since then, I've found an experienced and trusted advisor, my spiritual director, that I meet with monthly. I share my concerns and challenges with him and together we explore spiritual responses to my queries.

Pastors are not the only ones who need a trusted, experienced advisor or mentor. My Friday breakfast buddy, as I call Jose, mentors college and university students in an entrepreneurial program at Cal State Fullerton. Many businesses match new employees with experienced employees to help the new employees learn the ropes and succeed in their jobs.

We all need mentors. I believe this is especially true of new Christ-followers who need someone to help them grow in their faith. During the spiritual renewal weekend I participate in from time to time, one of our talks encourages men to find another man who is mature in his Christian faith and establish a relationship with that man. On the women's weekend, the women are encouraged to find another woman mature in her Christian faith. The reason we make this suggestion is so that each person will have a mature-in-faith Christ-follower to guide and encourage the individual. We all need someone to help us grow and mature in our faith, to mentor us.

My question to you today, which I asked earlier: who mentored you? Who was your trusted advisor? Who helped you grow and develop your life as a Christ-follower? Who was it that mentored you in the faith? (PAUSE)

There is a legend about a king who decided to set aside a special day to honor his greatest subject. When the big day arrived, there was a large gathering in the palace courtyard. Four finalists were brought forward; from these four, the king would select the winner.

The first person presented was a wealthy philanthropist. The king was told that this man was highly deserving of the honor because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given much of his wealth to the poor.

The second person was a celebrated physician. The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the honor because he had rendered faithful and dedicated service to the sick for many years.

The third person was a distinguished judge. The king was told that the judge was worthy because he was noted for his wisdom, fairness and brilliant decisions.

The fourth person presented was an elderly woman. Everyone was quite surprised to see her there, because her manner was quite humble, as was her dress. She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honored as the greatest subject in the kingdom. What chance could she possibly have compared to the other three who had accomplished so much?

Even so, there was something about her; the look of love in her face, the understanding in her eyes, her quiet confidence.

The king was intrigued, to say the least, and somewhat puzzled by her presence. He asked who she was. The answer came: "You see the philanthropist, the doctor and the judge? Well, she was their teacher and mentor!"

The woman had no wealth, no fortune and no title; but she unselfishly had given her life to produce great people – to mentor them. (Chad Ballard, SermonCentral newsletter, 7-31-06)

Who mentored you?

Now, I have a second question for you. Who have you mentored in the faith?

Mentoring someone in the faith means being a trusted advisor, spending time with that someone, sharing life experiences, your story, and, specifically, sharing with the person you are mentoring what Christ means to you, what your faith means to you, what the church means to you.

Who have you mentored in the faith?

Most of you are old enough to have mentored several people. How wonderful! Don't stop now! There are neighbors, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, friends, new church members. The list goes on and on. There are many opportunities, just pick one – no pick several, especially if you're retired!

We know from this letter Paul wrote to Timothy that Paul mentored pastors. But we also have letters from Paul to other churches, churches composed of individuals he knew personally. He was mentoring them through these letters. He was helping them to mature in their faith and understanding of the Good News: Jesus Christ died for our sins so that we may be forgiven and have life eternal.

If you are mentoring, thank you! If you're not mentoring, look around and find someone to establish a relationship with and help them grow their faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Time is of the essence!

Let me close with this story. During the reign of Oliver Cromwell, the British government began to run low on silver for coins. Lord Cromwell sent his men to the local cathedral to see if they could find any precious metal there. After investigating they reported: "The only silver we can find is in the statues of the saints standing in the corners," to which the radical soldier and statesman of England replied: "Good! We'll melt down the saints and put them in circulation!"

That brief but direct order indicates the essence of being an authentic Christ-follower. We are not rows of silver saints crammed into the corners of churches, but melted saints circulating through the mainstream of humanity, where life happens. ("Saints in Circulation" - Day by Day - June 3, 2010 on Crosswalk.com)

All of us, you and me, are those melted saints circulating through the mainstream of humanity. While you're out there circulating, meet a few people. Help them grown in their faith and relationship with Jesus. Like Paul, become a mentor.

May God bless your every effort.