

Sermon for 11-08-09  
2 Timothy 1:3-10

### Part 1 – Children’s Sermon (Ezekiel 11:19-21)

Have you ever kept asking someone to play but they didn’t want to play? Me asking Joe and Audrey to have ice cream they said no over and over. God helped them make a new decision one time, led to them following God and joining the church. God wants us to be his people. God has helped the teenager decide to join the church, to be his people. They make a new decision to follow Jesus, what may happen next? You can be like them and follow Jesus. When we follow Jesus we all will be God’s people together.

### Part 2 – Follow-up to Confirmand’s joining/Communion Meditation (2 Timothy 1:3-10)

Six young men and women have confessed faith in Jesus Christ publically. Our congregation has reaffirmed our promises to support and challenge them and one another as we live out faith. Faith lives in us. Faith can be real in you. Faith is something that happens in real people. Confessing faith in Jesus Christ is not just a moment of belief or an affirmation of our parents or grandparents values. Sincere faith is not something of our creation. Real faith is not something we walk away from. Is our faith real/sincere? Is our commitment to Jesus real, will it be proved real?

There will be times when you struggle with faith, when you feel like exiting the church or when Jesus Christ seems unimportant in your life. At these times we can remember today. We recall our own confession of faith. We remember other’s faith stories. Sincere faith connects us with others who have faith in Jesus Christ. Faith didn’t begin with us. Our ancestors, those around us have faith, they may have gotten some things wrong, but they served God and continue to follow Jesus.

Having memories of God at work to draw on is important in continuing to live in faith. Having faith makes us long to be together with others who have sincere faith. (not those who are perfect or don’t doubt, but those who have helped shaped our faith, those who we have had a part in shaping their faith; those who are genuine about their encounters with Jesus and how those encounters continue to impact their lives. We have a lot to share with each other as we follow Jesus and serve God.

You get to serve God! Not just in the way someone else did, but in the way God has asked you to do it. God has given you a gift, a special way to serve him, which is enabled by His grace. Sincere faith leads to discovering and using your gift.

There will be times when you feel you have nothing to offer, that God has made your life small, or you feel that you want to give up on the church. Often times youth and for that matter many who join the church don't use gifts and get detached from the community of faith. As a church we are each called to together support and challenge each other in using our gift. Our scripture uses the image of fire, "rekindle/fan into flame the gift of God." We need 'the fire' from God and from each other so that following God is not defined by cowardice (fear of discovering our gifts, fear of doing something with our gifts or running away from community when we struggle with faith).

There is the tendency for fire to go out if it is not stirred, or if a coal gets separated from other coals it goes cold. We need others to encourage us, to support us, and to challenge us to use our gifts. Being a part of a Christian community where others are using their gifts motivates and frees us to more easily discover and use our gifts. (When things are rough for me as a pastor, I need support, encouragement, and challenge).

There will be times when faith doesn't feel real. There will be times when you don't care about others. There will be times you feel the temptation not to do what you know God wants. In our life of faith God empowers us with his spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline. We have God's power to serve in faith. We have his spirit so that we act expressing our gifts in love. We have his spirit of self-discipline that we may not prove our faith false by our actions.

"There was a test conducted by a university where 10 students were placed in a room. Three lines of varying length were drawn on a card. The students were told to raise their hands when the instructor pointed to the longest line. But 9 of the students had been instructed beforehand to raise their hands when the instructor pointed to the second longest line. One student was the stooge. The usual reaction of the stooge was to put his hand up, look around, and realizing he was all alone, pull it back down. This happened 75% of the time, with students from grade school through high school."

Do not ashamed of this faith you are choosing that God has put in you. God calls us to a holy life. Faith lived out involves suffering, denial of self, following where Jesus and not friends or even family lead. This may seem impossible, but we can do this because of the grace of Jesus Christ, because we have been united with Christ and continue to choose to be found in his love.

We have been saved from sin and called to a life of following Jesus, who lived a holy life and brought God's kingdom near. We can share the good news that God offers everyone life and immortality in Jesus Christ. You are ready to share this good news, despite your fears, despite the likelihood of suffering, even though it means taking a path that is less traveled. We are made bold because we are in relationship with others who have sincere faith, who will support, encourage,

and challenge each other as we rely on God's grace. I pray that your reliance on God's grace in Jesus Christ is so evident in your words and actions in this community of faith and in our town that you are agents of God's transformation, bringing new life.

Part 3 – Closing Challenge (Luke 9:23-26)

Will you new members of our church be faithful to the grace given you in Christ Jesus, denying yourselves, suffering, and following Jesus? Will we as a church be faithful to the commitment (to be Christ's body sent out to minister in the world which) we have reaffirmed here today by sharing Communion? OR Will we by our actions show that we are ashamed of Jesus Christ and deny the commitment that each of us has made here today?