



Theme: Radical Women

“Eunice – Woman of Family, Faith and Grace”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber on...

July 24-25, 2021

Weekly Memory Verse:

⁵ I’m reminded of your [Timothy] authentic faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. I’m sure that this faith is also inside you. –2 Timothy 1:5

VIDEO Sermon Bumper

SLIDE “Eunice – Woman of Family, Faith and Grace”

Today we continue in a series of sermons we are doing focusing on radical women of faith who have had a deep impact on us even gathering for worship. We have had great preachers the past month and I have enjoyed a break and am now excited to focus on one of the women in the New Testament who was essential to the church being born and many becoming followers of Jesus in the first century. I think it is helpful to have a bit of background on Eunice before we jump into her story.

Last week, Julia did a great job helping us focus on Lydia who was

someone who came to faith in Jesus Christ through the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. Eunice is someone who became a follower of Jesus, along with her mother Lois, on Paul's first missionary journey. Let's take a look at that journey on the video screen together.

GRAPHIC Paul's First Missionary Journey LARGE

Paul's journeys took place as he left Jerusalem and headed up to Antioch in what is modern day Syria. This all happens around the Mediterranean Sea. The area to the north is modern day Turkey and to the left is Greece. Modern day Israel and Jerusalem are on your right.

GRAPHIC Paul's First Missionary Journey CLOSE UP

As we zoom in, we see that Paul will head to the island of Cyprus and then head to Perga and to Antioch in Turkey, called Galatia in the first Century. In this region, Paul and Barnabas, Paul's traveling companion, received great opposition from the Jewish leaders to hearing the gospel. Paul and Barnabas then travel to Iconium to escape being killed, eventually making their way to Lystra and Derbe.

While in Lystra, Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for Greek gods and Paul is stoned to the edge of death and thrown into prison. But it's during his time in this city that he meets Lois and her daughter Eunice, both Jewish women who are married to Greek gentiles. Eunice has a son named Timothy who becomes Paul's protégé. It should be noted that without Lois and Eunice and Timothy, the gospel may never have spread the way it did as Timothy eventually becomes the leader of the early church. You can read all about this in the book of Acts, chapter 14.

It becomes critical to understand that Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Greek father and the role that no doubt played in his being able to share the gospel, the good news of Jesus, with Gentiles throughout Greece and Turkey in the first century. We read these words in Paul's second letter to Timothy, chapter 1.

BIBLE

³ Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴ I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again.

⁵ I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. ⁶ This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. —2 Timothy 1:3-7

Let's hear from Eunice a bit of her story and what that might've been like to raise Timothy with a mother like Lois and husband who was Greek.

(Lights go dark and then front stage lights only, lighting cue #5.)

SLIDE Eunice

(Monologue from Amanda McCaleb)

(Lights go dark at the line, “And you won't let my mother have the last word...will you?!”)

(Preaching lights come up.)

There powerful ways of the leave the story of Eunice connects to us today. Let's take a look at a few of them together.

SLIDE A Family Divided

The first thing I want us to notice is how this family is divided and dealing with tension because of faith in Jesus and the Greco-Roman world in which they all live. I often have conversations with couples and individuals about being in a marriage or family where people have

different beliefs and how challenging that can be. Sometimes differences revolve around faith and other times they revolve around politics or some other important belief that is strongly held by different people in the same family. The story of Eunice and Lois and Timothy reminds us that we are not alone when we struggle with these kinds of tensions.

Indeed, I'm reminded that almost every single one of the letters of Paul is written to a church community or individual where there is division. Timothy himself has witnessed these kinds of divisions in his own family, having a mother who was Jewish and a father who was Greek. When my favorite texts from Paul's second letter to Timothy comes in chapter 2 where he says these words.

BIBLE

²³ Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. ²⁴ A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. ²⁵ Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth.

Paul uses the word "again" which suggests he has often given this advice to Timothy, no doubt helping him in his own family of origin as well as with others in the Greco-Roman world who are immersed in worshipping other gods. These are important words for us to hear today in a world that is divided over everything from politics to vaccines to masks to religion. Paul reminds Timothy of something he probably learned from his mother Eunice, to be kind to everyone and to be patient with difficult people, including his own father, and gently instruct those who oppose the truth of the gospel which Timothy has been called to preach. The reason for doing this is because then God might change people's hearts through our kindness. I'm reminded of these words of the apostle Paul in his letter to

the Romans, chapter 2.

BIBLE

(NIV) 2 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

It is God's kindness which is meant to lead us towards repentance, which is a turning back towards God. I have learned this truth in today's world, that no one who feels judged wants to have anything to do with Christians or God for that matter. This is just human nature, to push back against judgment and get defensive.

We say we want to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world here at Summit Church. We put it on everything to remind ourselves of this purpose in our lives. Especially in our families, we are invited to be the presence of Jesus 24/7. I remind people often who have spouses or children who have pushed away the Christian faith that these words from Paul that we just read are meant to be lived out in our lives in a very real and tangible way. I have heard story after story of people who have prayed for a child or parent or spouse to say "yes" to faith in Jesus Christ. Some have prayed for years until finally, something happens, and a heart is opened, and a life is changed. What I've learned and experienced is that if we offer judgment, we bear very little fruit. I have learned from listening to people story that our timing is not God's timing, and our task is to

simply plant seeds and then water them with tenderness and mercy and care.

This Scripture is why often challenge us as a congregation to not sacrifice our relationships for the sake of what we think is right or the truth. It's clear that Eunice and Lois, being married to people for whom faith was far away, lived out their faith in a way that was compelling because of the many people in their community who came to Christ. They did so, and passed on that heritage to Timothy, because of the grace they experience in Jesus Christ. They were willing to put themselves in the place of the other and in so doing able to offer Christ in a way that was real and compelling.

SLIDE Offer Grace

This is the second lesson we learned from Eunice who clearly offer grace to those within her Jewish heritage and those in the Greco-Roman world around her. This is one of the values of this church as we talk about how we want to be in relationships and be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world.

I was visiting recently with a young man who began attending our church and is interested in baptism. He has been to church on numerous occasions with friends and the message he has seem to hear most times has been, "If you don't receive Jesus and get baptized, you are going to hell, so you better do this thing!" That message pushed him farther and farther away until he met someone at work who showed up when life was going hard for him and simply offer him kindness. They began to have conversations about life and faith and eventually he asked his friend why he reached out to him when they hardly knew each other at work. His friend told him that he had been doing morning Meditation Moments from his church and the prayer that morning was to be paying attention to people God might be putting in his path. He figured the Holy Spirit has

placed his friend in his path and he was simply following God to lead. That led to more conversations about faith and an open heart.

In the monologue from Eunice today we heard her refer to the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9.

BIBLE

¹⁹ Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. ²⁰ When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ...(OMIT LINE)

²¹ When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

²² When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. ²³ I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

There is this idea that we are to enter into the lives of others in a way that we can come alongside, and not act superior. One of the values we hope to live out in our relationships. This church is one that the apostle Paul talks about in his letter to the Philippians, chapter 2.

BIBLE

1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? ² Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

*⁶ Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.*

*⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.*

When he appeared in human form,

*⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

SLIDE Humility

We are invited to acknowledge that we don't have it all together and we will work to know the difference between self-confidence and pride. We thoughtfully ask when we have added value to another person and if what we are doing will build someone up or tear someone down. I put it to this way as we were talking about politics this last fall.

SLIDE Do I demand my own way or am I willing to give myself away?

It is why, when we have gotten worked up over wearing a mask over the past year and half, I have had to remind myself that if Jesus wore a cross, I can wear a mask. Are we willing to have that same attitude as Christ Jesus who became obedient to death on a cross? I would suggest that if all of us who follow Jesus were willing to live into this truth declared by Eunice and Lois and Timothy and Paul, the **Christian faith would be overwhelmingly compelling instead of repelling others which we often do in today's world.**

This leads us the last thing I want to focus on today that we learn from Eunice and her story. Today's world, we have many young people in particular who have pushed faith away because of the way we have chosen to share it or demand that others receive it. Eunice and Lois never did that with their children or grandchildren, but instead chose to invest in them. They were unwilling to sacrifice their relationships with their spouses or their children, because they understood the power the next generation holds to carry on what it means to follow Jesus. They understood it would be a faith which would be expressed differently than their own, just like I expressed my faith differently than my parents or grandparents before me. The gospel is the same, but the way it is reflected looks much different in terms of music and worship and experiencing God's Word.

SLIDE Intergenerational

Lois and Eunice and Timothy show us how it is we can be intergenerational even though we are very different from one generation to the next.

GRAPHIC The-Early-Days-Of-Timothy

One of my favorite depiction of these three generations is this painting by Henry Le Jeune entitled, "The Early Days of Timothy," painted in the late 1800s. There we see Timothy depicted with his mother Eunice who spent many hours with him reading the Scriptures, while Timothy's grandmother Lois encourages them. Remember that there was no New Testament at this point, and I wonder as I look at this Scripture if they are living out these words from the Hebrew Bible book of Proverbs, chapter 22.

BIBLE

**⁶ Direct your children onto the right path,
and when they are older, they will not leave it.**

Notice that it tells us WHEN THEY ARE OLDER! This is why we must be careful not to sacrifice our relationship with our children even when we disagree on faith or politics or any other issue. We never know when those seeds that we implanted will come to bear fruit. We never know when us living out our faith, even as we are older, will be a witness to our children or grandchildren when they are older.

We are doing our River baptism service again at the end of August this year and I'm very excited. We couldn't do it last year because of the pandemic, but this year we will gather at the Pine River at Eagle Valley Park in Bayfield on the last Sunday afternoon in August for anyone to get in the river to reaffirm their baptism or be baptized for the first time. I found myself thinking about that experience because we read that Eunice and Lois and Timothy were all baptized by the apostle Paul. I found myself thinking about a gentleman who was baptized in the river a few years ago with us and how this year he is excited because his son would like to be baptized before he goes off to college. There has been much prayer and discernment and conversation for both of them, but patience and God's timing are different than our own.

It is why I chose this text from 2 Timothy, chapter 1, that we read earlier, to be our Scripture memory verse for the week. Will you say it together with me? Remember that this is Paul writing to Timothy.

BIBLE

⁵ I'm reminded of your authentic faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. I'm sure that this faith is also inside you. –2 Timothy 1:5

I'm sure this faith is also inside of you. I leave you with these images of our intergenerational Vacation Bible School this past week as we wandered in the wilderness with our children, remembering the story of the Israelites and Moses. They learned to TRUST GOD!

GRAPHICS of VIDEO (Photos of VBS)

Here's something that I know. Many of these young people will grow up and move away from God and the church. Something will happen in their lives that will cause them to doubt. Maybe it's the death of a loved one or a relationship which breaks or a job which is lost or failing a class or a health crisis or mental health struggles. What we know is that faith is now inside of each of them, and our hope and prayer and trust is that God will show up and help carry them in those moments, even though they don't realize it.

I doubt that Eunice thought her son Timothy would be the one that Paul would choose to carry on the Christian faith and leave the church, especially since his father was a Greek and not a person of faith. Yet, God has a way of surprising us. Our task is to be **faithful**, loving our family through **difficult moments of division**, offering **grace, instead of judgment**, and **investing in the next generation** like Eunice. I pray we will discover those truths from this powerful story of a radical woman of faith. Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

God, we thank you for Eunice who shows us what it means to be a person of faith in a challenging and divided world. Some of us in this room are living in a divided family or community. Help us to be inspired by Eunice and her willingness to build a bridge between two worlds so that people could receive the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. May we find the courage and strength to offer grace when we would rather offer a word of judgment. Forgive us when we fail and remind us that you are a God who invites us to turn around and going a new direction with you, and through you all broken relationships can be made new. Most of all, remind us that others have invested in us and now you invite us to invest in the next generation, planting seeds of faith inside of them they will carry with them

for a lifetime and that will bear fruit in God's time. We pray these things in the name of your Son Jesus, Amen.

SLIDE Baptism of Audrey Lee Barnes (at 9:30 a.m.)

June 24-25 Order

1. Ely Welcomes people
2. Two Songs, followed by prayer and Lord's Prayer
3. Welcome and invite people to wave and be seated.
4. Invite children to go to Summit Kids.
5. Connect bag.
6. Announcements by Jeff (Check News Section on Website)
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7. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
8. Video bumper plays.
9. Sermon
10. Prayer after sermon
11. Baptism of Audrey Lee Barnes at 9:30 a.m.
12. Offering Reminder (VBS)
13. 1 Song of Worship
14. Prayer
15. Meditation Moments reminder by Jeff
16. Closing Prayer