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Trinity Presbyterian Church – Pensacola, FL  
May 9, 2010 6th Sunday After Easter, Cycle C Mother's Day

## "LOIS AND EUNICE"

2 Timothy 1;1-8

*Inspired by Linda Stolhanske's writing course during Tapestry 2010 at Trinity Presbyterian Church- Pensacola, FL and my 1980 sermon, "Lois and Eunice," prompted by an article by John Vannorsdall, "Fair Street", 1970's, source long since forgotten, expressing appreciation to the people of small town churches, USA.*

Grandmother Lois lived on Greenville Street, five blocks down from the Courthouse Square. Small southern town, two story brick facades around the square: shops below, offices and apartments above. Hardware store, dress shop, gift shop, drugstore on corner by the bank, old men drinking coffee at tables in the back of the at the drugstore discussing current events; old homes tucked under oak trees; azaleas and maple trees giving glory to God in their due seasons.

Timothy could picture her and her house in his mind; the sights and sounds and smells of her home were still vivid:

The heavy brassy clunk-clunk-clunk of the door knocker

The old lace doilies on the chair backs and table tops. Black rotary telephone in the hallway.

A bowl of potpourri in the living room giving off its sweet perfume.

There was the tin biscuit box in the kitchen -- he use to sneak in at night, after everyone else was asleep, and relish the taste of biscuits with butter and damson preserves.

Her desk in the den-with cubby holes stuffed with papers and photos, an orange box of Luden's cough drops, with their bitter sweet taste; and the tell-tale squeak that alerted Grandma when young hands were snitching candy from her dresser drawer.

She kept a box of toys in the hall closet ready for visiting grandchildren.

Her home was like those up and down Greenville Street: Modest home, small front yard carefully mowed and clipped, beloved azaleas and dogwoods.

The sidewalk – cracked and slanting slabs of concrete, with tufts of weeds in the cracks -- waiting to snag skate wheels and send children toppling, skinning knees and elbows.

The old street lights; cast iron poles with ornate filigree decoration, topped by heavy globes of milk glass -- moons rising in the summer night.

The neighbors; Miss Harriet, Marie, the Dillard's, the folks in the big house across the street - who rarely came out and whose names he never remembered, or never knew.

These were the people of Greenville Street. Lois and Eunice, Jim and Minnie,

People who sipped morning coffee while reading their papers and went to work...came home...worked in the yard...ate supper...watched a little TV. Visited friends or went to bridge club or church committee meeting. Faithful citizens who voted their conscience, paid their taxes and mortgages, volunteered on community boards and agencies.

They waved from the front porch...checked the mail and lingered on the sidewalk, talking about the weather ....showed latest photos of the grandchildren.

They bought things they neither needed nor wanted from the school children selling magazines and wrapping paper and chocolate bars, fund raising for their school,

They sometimes fought... or got depressed, got bored...maybe got their names in the newspaper or were celebrated at their service club, but they were not successes; at least not as success was measured in politics or popularity or financial clout.

But they worked hard and maintained their yard, cooked honest meals, and educated their children, volunteered at school and joined the PTA.

They loved their families, and took pride in their accomplishments, and enjoyed a measure of success and happiness as they defined it.

They are the solid, silent, working class...

The mothers and fathers to whom you and I are indebted for our Christian faith and morals and ethics...

Grandmother Lois...mother Eunice...the members of churches on Greenville St and Main St and Bayou Blvd and

innumerable streets and towns and neighborhoods.

The organists and choir directors and volunteer choirs, hoping to have enough members present for an anthem. The committee members who earnestly go about their work; making phone calls and writing letters, opening their meetings with prayer, doing their work in the name of Christ... equipping us for the life of Christian love and service and education.

They are the Sunday School teachers...preparing lessons and drawing posters, and the Christian Education Committee in their busywork...recruiting teachers and ordering materials.

These are they who sit on floors, draped with children, singing "Jesus Loves Me this I Know"

who serve in a world of puppets and flannel boards, crayons and cupcakes...

who sit at small tables with finger paints,

while others down the hall sit at grown up tables, in grownup chairs, drink coffee, read the Bible together, and struggle with questions about family...and world hunger...and peacemaking.

They are Lois and Eunice, men and women trying to insure that the children of Greenville Street and Bayou Blvd are raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord...discovering and enjoying the riches of the Christian Faith.

These are the officers and secretaries and custodians and nursery keepers----fulfilling the necessary busywork of church life.

These are the people to whom you and I am indebted and for whom I am thankful.

YOU...I...WE... ARE THE LOIS'S AND EUNICE'S OF OUR DAY ... passing on to Timothy what Paul calls the "faith within us". (2 Timothy 1:5) We are the ones of modest homes and bridge clubs and coffee groups. And it is the sounds and sweet airs of our homes... the pictures proudly displayed on refrigerator doors... the carpools and piano lessons and dance lessons...Vacation Bible School and service projects, feeding the homeless at Loaves and Fishes, Christmas presents for foster families, these are the affiliations with us that our children will remember.

And hopefully what they will also remember are--

--the sights and sounds and feelings of being in Sunday School...

the Bible stories and pictures of Kings and Queens and Shepherds and Saviors,

memory verses and memorable people which will come back to them in times of need and bring

them hope and make God real to them again. .

If they are to experience and remember these things it is up to us to be sure that **they are here** for Sunday School and worship and service projects and mission trips.

"I don't get anything out of it!" They protest. "I don't want to go!"

And Lois and Eunice respond, "One day you will though...one day you will. So come on...

let's go!"

The Apostle Paul warned young Timothy not to take his faith in vain, inherited and strong as it was: *"I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure it is in you as well. ...I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of hands."* (2 Tim. 1:6).

Our culture and world today tempts us with heresies and mixed-messages and scandalous publicity that we must resist and battle daily. We need not struggle alone, because we are surrounded by humble heroes, Lois and Eunice, Lewis and Eugene, who show us the way every day and train us up in the ways of the Lord, and bolster us and give us courage.

- Paul reaffirms his confidence in Timothy, *"I am mindful of the sincere faith within you."* Does anything inspire you more than to know that someone believes in you? Who has been your mentor? Your mother, your father, your teacher, your neighbor, friend, coach?

- *"The faith you have come by way of your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice,"* reminds Paul. Don't do anything to besmirch your family's honor, and indeed, thank God for your mother and grandmother's witness, example, influence in your life!
- *"Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of hands."* You were set apart for your calling by our prayer, when we lay hands upon you to confer the gift. You are not alone; you are surrounded by communion of saints, a church congregation full of Lois's and Eunice's - draw strength from us, from God, develop the habits that feed your spirit and your soul.
- What Lois and Eunice learned by experience, they now share with us, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is power –
  - Power to cope with anything, to stand firm no matter what happens;
  - Power to conquer self
  - Power to overcome circumstances
  - Power to keep on keeping on when life threatens to defeat you
  - Power to be a Christian when being a Christian is hard.

If our children and families and friends would learn and grow in Faith, then, over and over, for their sake and ours, we must be their Lois and Eunice,

we must speak the truth and teach the ways of Jesus our Lord,  
tell them of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.

And if they would see and hear and feel the presence of God in their lives,

we must pray with them, have devotions at our tables, say meal time grace, listen to their bedtime prayers, read their emails and text messages and listen to their hearts and speak to their spirits.

It is through us...Lois and Eunice...Lewis and Eugene...that our children and grandchildren develop ...or fail to develop... the Christian faith as Timothy knew it:

a Spirit not of timidity, but of power and service...and love and self-discipline !

Lois and Eunice may not have preached in church,

but their notes and Bible verses taped to refrigerator doors,  
and family devotions and table blessings,

and the casserole dishes delivered to the back doors of friends and neighbors grieving or  
struggling preached more love and faith and hope than will a hundred worship services!

Timothy saw in his beloved Lois Christian love and compassion at its best. He sensed the strength and power and love in her faith.

Hearing about tithing and seeing her put her offering envelope in the plate each Sunday, he  
learned about stewardship.

Hearing her fret about what to say to the grieving family or the angry neighbors and yet seeing  
her go to visit anyway, he learned about trusting God to help you in difficult situations.

Hearing her talk to the birds as she filled the feeder and birdbath, and humming old hymns to  
herself while trimming the roses and pruning the Crape Myrtles, he learned the mystery and  
joy of communing with God the Creator.

Lois gave to Eunice and to Timothy

the love of God and neighbor and self

the courage it takes to be a Christian

the power to cope with responsibilities and to face sorrow and disappointment.

"The power to pass the breaking point without breaking." (William Barclay)

Faith being passed from one generation to another -

...That is why we sit together in wooden pews and in Sunday School chairs.

...and why we sing the Doxology and pray the Lord's prayer and recite the Apostles' Creed.  
...That's why we pray and praise and offer ourselves unto the Lord.

On this Mother's Day I thank God for Lois and Eunice!

The countless mothers and grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers, who have modeled for us  
how to raise our families in dignity ... to pray our silent prayers ... to welcome the Sunday  
celebrations...

how to give ourselves to the Church to teach, to serve, to mentor, to share our faith with the  
Timothy's entrusted to our care....

You may not feel that you are successes as far as the world measures success; but to me you are beautiful... and in  
God's kingdom on earth, you are a success....

for it is out of YOU... Lois, and through you...Eunice,  
that Jesus the Christ is crucified and raised again each day...  
up and down the block, on Greenville Street.

--AMEN--