

Faith Requires Patience

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Psalm 112 and Luke 14:1, 7-14

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In my continuing education about growing vegetables, I have taken on a new aspect of growing. I am learning to harvest my own seeds to grow next year. We have about five or six different varieties of tomatoes growing and I asked my family which varieties were their favorites. I then followed some instructions on how to harvest and properly save them for next spring. This process requires faithfulness and patience. You can't rush the process. You have to follow the steps and be humble enough to keep at it and learn from every mistake along the way. This year I hope to collect tomato, pepper and green bean seeds along with some herb seeds, so I can grow my own next year.

I enjoy this hobby of growing because it connects me to my family and heritage. You see the humble beginnings of my family in the US started with a pocket full of tomato seeds and a young man named Fred Busch. Sometime in the 1870s Fred left Germany and migrated the US eventually ending in Minneapolis seeking a place for a fresh start. He started one of the first greenhouse businesses in Minneapolis. This growing heritage was passed down from father to son through four generations. Today the Busch name in the Twin Cities is known for the over 50 million stem flowers and pots that they grow year-round near Minneapolis at my cousin's green house. Len Busch Roses is now owned and run by his son Patrick. You see Len passed away earlier this week and was laid to rest yesterday. As

much as I would love to boast about my connections to the Busch greenhouse legacy, I really know very little compared to my cousins still in the business.

But whether you are the owner of a massive 15-acre greenhouse like my cousins or a simple back yard enthusiast like myself or somewhere in between the principle of growing beautiful things is the same. It takes time, patience, hard work and faithfulness. You cannot rush the process, as they say sure and steady wins the race.

At the beginning of any journey, it can feel impossible to imagine where you will be in ten or twenty years, or even what kind of legacy you will leave behind. For my family the beginnings of our dreams was a pocket full of seeds that planted hope and faith for the coming generations. I don't know if my Great Grandfather Fred could have dreamed the large legacy that has followed. I am sure he would be surprised by the innovative ways the business has embraced to stay competitive in today's flower market. Such faith takes a lot of patience and resilience to stay the course. This patience though is not an idle thing. You need to tend to it and nurture it faithfully over time trusting in the process and doing your part. Just like growing a healthy flower business. In Psalm 112 we see many of the elements the author credits to creating an abundant legacy. Listen to these two verses from Psalm 112

“They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice.”

I think those are some accurate elements to building generational faith for today. So, lets break it down a bit and reflect on them for us today.

1. They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright.

- a. Consistent faithfulness and hard work. Being a faithful Christian is a lifestyle that you do each and every day.
 - b. We also are a light of inspiration during hard times for others. People look up to our faithfulness to inspire them to carry on when life gets hard.
2. Grace, mercy and righteousness are essential in life
- a. Grace for when people wrong you. You don't hold a grudge or allow a past wrong cut you off from relationships that are important.
 - b. Mercy to not inflict harm when you want to punish others.
 - c. Righteousness is part of an honest and upright life. Exploitation of others inflicts harm on all. We are called to be righteous as God is also righteous.
3. Deal Generously, lend and seek justice.
- a. These three elements seek the good of the community over the selfish desires of the individual. When we are generous, we celebrate and embrace the community sharing our blessings with others.
 - b. Lending to others is an investment of their success also.
 - c. To seek justice is to protect the vulnerable and less fortunate from harm.

These elements are principles of a faithful life for all people. Like my Great Grandfather in Minnesota the founders of East Church came to Grand Rapids with a pocket full of faith they planted and nurtured to build East Church. These are the elements of patient faith that grew this church for over a century. It is these traditions of faith that will help carry East Church into the next generation more than anything.

Now I know that we all would love to discover a magic key to unlock a floodgate of new members to East Church. But the real key is patient faithfulness and dedication by all of us. These elements of a faithful life are the true keys to helping East Church thrive and carry on to the next generation.

Now whether you are wanting to tend to your own spiritual garden to be healthier and faithful or are looking to pass on the faithful legacy of East Church to another generation I encourage you to incorporate these principles into your daily life. Patient faithfulness, grace, mercy, generosity, righteousness, and justice. We may not be growing flowers or vegetables, but we are growing people of faith who are seeking to create better world. We are investing in one another, sharing in the abundance of God's love and seeking justice for those whom the world has trampled upon.

Micah 6:8 sums it up quite well:

God has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?

As we begin a new program year let us be gracious, merciful, faithful, give generously from our hearts, lend one another what they need to succeed and above all else let us do justice so that others grow in faith to the glory of God. Amen.