

Bible reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Year C, Pentecost 23

By Beth Barnett

Creative reading of 2 Timothy 4, reminding us to think about things that finish, and faith that lasts.

You will need:

- Copy of text, on screen or printed copies
- 9 large containers of various sizes (buckets, bottles, vases, jugs)
- Large tub (preferably transparent plastic) that will easily hold the combined volume of water from all 9 containers

Time required:

7 – 10 minutes (if read twice)

Instructions / set up

Each container should have one section of text (see template at the end) printed in large font and stuck to the outside. Each container should be no more than 1/3 full of water. If any of the containers are see-through, add a few drops of different food dye to the water. On the base of each container, clearly write the word "FAITH"

Introduction:

Our Bible reading today comes from a book called Second Timothy. It's written in the form of a letter from an older follower of Jesus to a younger follower of Jesus, and this part of it is about two things: finishing and faith – it's about finishing things, finishing up, feeling finished ourselves. And after we read, we will find out how it's about faith.

Sometimes finishing can be a sad experience for us, sometimes finishing, completing, getting the job done is full of Joy. If we listen carefully to the reading today we will hear of both kinds of finishing.

Here we have our Bible reading on 9 containers. As we read each part of the Bible reading, I am going to invite pairs of people to carefully pour out the water from the container into the tub.

Why are we doing that? Because each of these verses is either about being finished and emptied or, about something that is kept: faith.

The writer celebrates both the things that have been poured out and finished (and you can listen out for what they are) as well as what is left – the thing that holds everything else and is left at the end – Faith.

*Invite pairs of volunteers to come forward, ready to pour the containers of water with each line of the reading, and place the container back in in order
Read each verse slowly, and expressively. Allow time for the sound of the pouring water to be heard.*

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them!

But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

We now have 9 empty containers. They have been all poured out, and they are empty. All finished.

In the Bible passage we have just read, lots of things were finished or ran out or gave up.

Let's read again and see if we can name the things that have finished or run out. But there was one thing that was always kept. What was it?

It's in the Bible passage, but it is also on each of the containers. Perhaps our volunteer pourer will hold up each container as we read so that we can see what is left on each one?

Identify word "faith"

In this part of the Bible, lots of things are finished. But the faith God gives us remains.

The writer of 2 Timothy isn't afraid of things finishing – of coming to the end of his life, of his friends leaving, and he is longing for the time when the good news of God's love in Jesus is completely finished being poured out and shared with everybody – so that everyone knows God's love.

May we share in that kind of finishing faith. Amen.



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