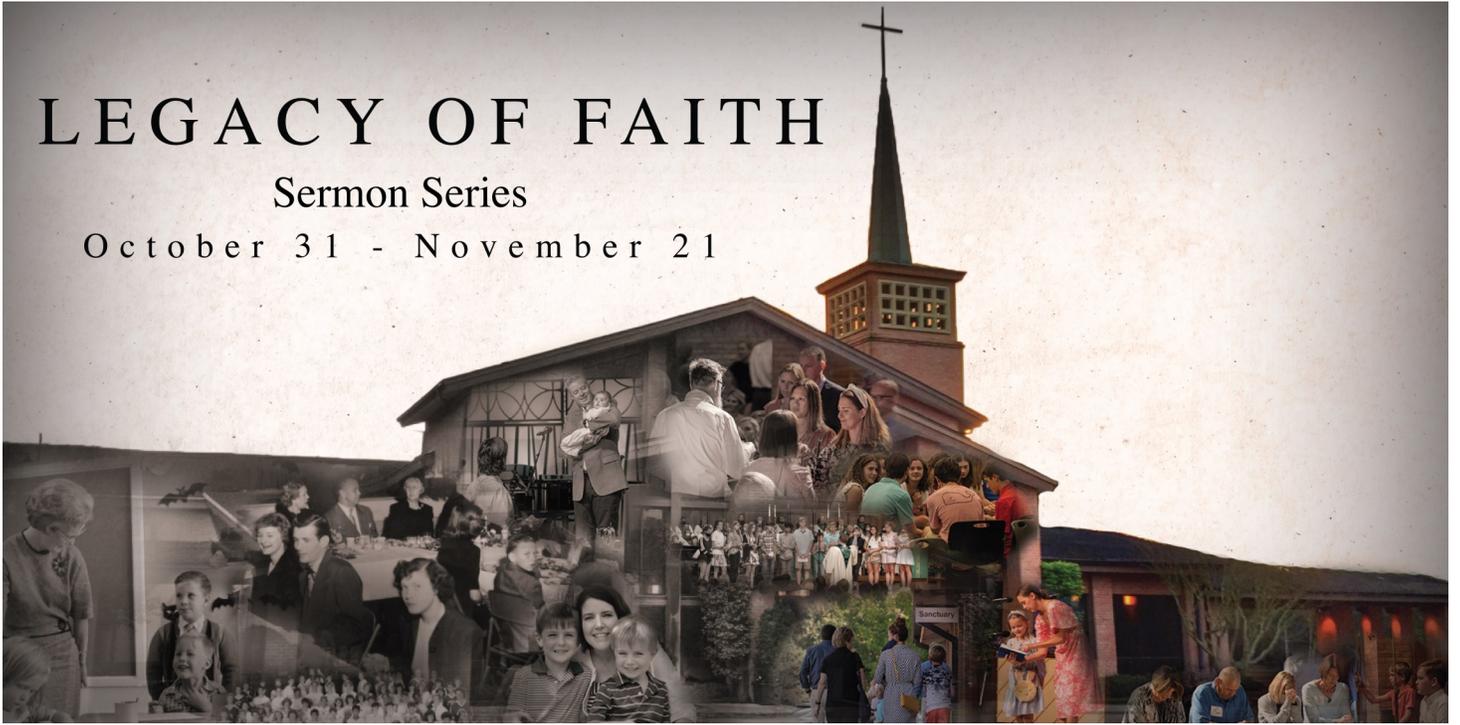


LEGACY OF FAITH

Sermon Series

October 31 - November 21



THE FAMILY LEGACY

October 31, Dr. John Stephens

LEGACY OF THE SAINTS

November 7, Dr. John Stephens

LEGACY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

November 14, Dr. John Stephens

THE GRATITUDE LEGACY

November 21, Dr. Matthew Russell

GOING BEYOND THE SERMON

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (NRSV)

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, 2 so that you and your children and your children’s children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. 7 Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Notes:

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

Ellsworth Kalas writes, “It could well be argued that Deuteronomy 6 is the most important chapter of the Old Testament because of the *Shema*, verse 4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.” Judaism identifies this sentence as the center of Jewish thought, upon which all other Jewish belief turns. No wonder, then, that the people are commanded to keep this word in their hearts, recite it to their children, talk about it, and make it an emblem on forehead and doorpost (6:7-9). There is a passion in this command that we should make our own.” (From *The Grand Sweep*, p. 48)

There are some Jews who literally wear this bit of Scripture on their foreheads in the form of phylacteries. Many Jewish households attach a mezuzah to the doorpost to fulfill this mitzvah (Biblical command). As Christians, we are also called to obey this command. How are we to keep ever in front of us and in front of our children that God is Lord alone? One key way is to think about God as Lord in our relationships. “The focus is not on God’s nature in the abstract but on the quality of Israel’s relationship to God.” That is what set Israel apart from all the other nations around it. They were God’s people, who were taught to love God and one another in unique ways. When a child grows up in a household that is set apart for God and whose family communes with God and follows the ways of God, then the word of God sinks from the head into the heart and forms that child, that family, that tribe, that nation from the inside out.

A-Apply

Once, when my daughter was young, we spent a fall afternoon sitting together in the backyard. We began to make a game of trying to remember the Ten Commandments by heart (we didn't want to go inside to fetch the Bible). In our own way, we were living the *Shema* -- keeping God's commands in our hearts, reciting them to our children, talking about them in creative ways. Some of the commandments made more sense to her than others. Closely tied to "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone" is "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol." (Exodus 20: 1-4) Mary Morgan quickly picked up on this concept. Here was her analogy: "Oh, you mean we shouldn't worship the Statue of Liberty?" Yes! We went on to talk about coveting, lying, stealing, and adultery (which I did my best to explain on her level). Her response to that commandment was, "Oh, Mommy, Daddy would never have another girlfriend." It was a sweet day and one that I will always remember. As a child, I had similar conversations with my grandparents and parents. Passing the faith through the generations is a sacred privilege. Don't miss a chance!

P- Prayer

God, you are Lord. I give you permission to permeate my mind and my heart. Where you find any disconnection in our relationship, make me aware quickly, so I may be restored to deep trust in You. Give me passion for sharing my devotion to you with others. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Going Beyond the Sermon is written by Teresa Rossy, Director of Adult Discipleship Ministries, Chapelwood United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas.

Source material is quoted throughout. The sermons are streamed online at www.chapelwood.org/archives. To get Going Beyond the Sermon in your inbox, e-mail Laura Frost, lfrost@chapelwood.org.

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Isaiah 25:6-9

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

7 And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

8 he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Notes

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

Chapters 24 -27 of Isaiah are a distinct block of writings, sometimes called the Isaiah apocalypse that falls at the end of the prophet’s oracles concerning the nations. “This material posits the future withering of creation (24:1-13), the downfall of an unnamed exalted city (24:10,12; 25:2,3; 26:5), the recognition of the Lord by the nations at Zion (25:6-8), and the ultimate restoration of Zion itself as the seat of the Lord’s sovereignty throughout the world of both creation and the nations . . . Rather than pointing to the end of time, chapters 24-27 point to the restoration of Jerusalem . . . following the portrayal of its period of punishment.” (New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV, p. 999)

Abraham J. Heschel writes “Isaiah holds out two hopes for mankind. One is immediate, partial, historical: ‘A remnant will return!’ The other is distant, final, eschatological: the transformation of the world *at the end of days* . . . Isaiah knew that disaster was bound to come, but also that a remnant would survive, that Zion would endure, and that through Israel and out of Zion redemption for all nations would flow.” (“The Prophets” p. 120)

A-Apply

This passage is chosen for Chapelwood's remembrance of All Saints Day. We will stand together and read the names of those in our congregation who have died in the past year. Due to COVID-19's devastating effects, we will read a record number of names – remembering a record number of deaths – recalling the memories of a record number of loved ones. In this passage, we are reminded that God sees our mourning and promises to remove the “shroud or sheet” that covers all the nations. God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

“Death has reigned over the nations, and has brought calamity with it. All the sufferings that have come to the world eventuate in this greatest calamity. From the hard, fierce bondage of this ruler, there appears to be no hope,” writes Edward J. Young in his three-volume commentary, *The Book of Isaiah*, published in 1969. The words sound as if they were written in 2021. “Therefore, the people wear a covering that they may mourn their miserable condition. God, however, will remove this covering, for there will no longer be need for it. When the Lord holds His feast on Zion, the nations may come and partake, freed of all causes for mourning and sorrow. That they may thus come is due to God's grace and not to their own merit . . . Even today the nations are busily engaging in trying to remove the covering by their own efforts. But it is God alone who swallows up that covering. Deliverance from death is a work of grace.”

Later in Isaiah 26:19 we find one of the few references in the Old Testament to the hope of bodily resurrection: “But those who die in the Lord will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy!” Jesus said, “I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it's here now, when the dead will hear my voice . . . And those who listen will live . . . Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, and they will rise again.” (John 5:25, 28-29)

It is a sacred act to mourn. Take time to remember the losses you have experienced during this time of pandemic. Remember your loved ones. Take heart and receive the grace of God.

P-Prayer

My only hope in this world plagued with death is that you, Jesus, have defeated it and that one day you will swallow it up so that it can never hurt me or those that I love ever again. My hope in the face of rampant death is your promise of resurrection life. Amen*

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Acts 11:21-26

The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”

Notes:

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

Would you love to be an Antiochian? This church, led by Barnabas, seems like the kind of community that is contagiously Christian. They were outreach oriented – speaking to Greek-speakers and Jews. They were hungry for learning and sought out the best teachers – Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus (Paul). They were generous -- giving to those in need. They had a dynamic, diverse leadership team who encouraged them. (See Acts 13:1-4). They were a Spirit-led body of believers who consistently held space open for outsiders. All of this growth happened during a time of persecution by the Roman government.

Barnabas’ nickname is Son of Encouragement. You can read more about him in Acts 4:23,36-37; 9:26-27; 12:25-13:52; 14:12-28; and 15:12-39. Studying characters in the Bible is a great way to see Biblical principles and values embodied. Some of Barnabas’ character traits are courage, patience, team players, fidelity, imagination, flexibility, discernment, faith. He could see God at work in complex situations. He knew who to add to his team. Larry Crabb, in his book titled Encouragement, writes that “Encouragement is the kind of expression that helps someone want to be a better Christian even when life is rough.”

A- Apply

When we receive courage from others, we are then better able to encourage others. Think about times when you have received the following kinds of encouragement. Note the time, place, and person who encouraged you. Then, make note of a similar situation that you are currently aware of in which you could extend grace to another person.

When I was an outsider

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When I needed instruction in the faith

When I needed money

When I needed faith to see my strengths

When I needed to be connected to someone new

When I needed a church home

Go back and write the name of someone you know who needs this same kind of encouragement today.

P-Prayer

Lord, thank you for the people who have encouraged me in my faith journey. Thank you for knowing what I needed and inviting me into fellowship with other believers. Fill me with the faith and heart for encouragement that Barnabas had, so that I may extend your grace to others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Notes:

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

The letter to the church at Philippi was written by Paul from prison. Like their spiritual leader, who was disliked by some Christians and by the authorities, the Philippians faced outside pressures that threatened their unity and effectiveness for Christ. Paul encourages them with three examples to follow – Jesus (2:5-11), Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30) and himself (3:4-14). All are models of self-sacrifice and self-giving for the good of the whole.

Immediately preceding our passage, Paul mentions Euodia and Syntyche, two women leaders in the Philippian church, most likely heads of house-churches, who have apparently disagreed about some matter that is creating factions. In this context, we read “Rejoice! Be gentle with one another. God is near, so ask him for help and give him thanks. Expect to be filled with God’s peace and your minds and hearts will be put at ease.” (my translation).

Then Paul gives very specific instructions about how to think and act. If we could think (and only think) about that which is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise, how might that affect our words and actions?

A-Apply

The best application for passages like this is to “bind them on our hearts.” (Remember the Shema that we studied in Week One of this series.) Memorize the passage. Much of it is probably familiar to you already. Will you challenge yourself to learn Philippians 4:4-9 word for word this week? Try this method.

- Write it out
- Break it down by highlighting key words
- Say it aloud
- Practice with a friend

P-Prayer

Lord, give me a mind that focuses on what is true, pure, excellent, and worthy of praise. Keep thoughts that are untrue and unworthy of you away from me. Shape me in the image of Christ so that my thoughts, words, and deeds point others to him. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen