

Lasting Legacies

2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Psalm 23

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Kirkland Congregational Church UCC

by Revs. Tod and Ana Gobledale

This weekend, I have been hearing a lot about the legacy Walter Conkrite left behind...”the most trusted voice in America.” And we have also been hearing a lot about the legacy left by Michael Jackson. What I want each of you to do now is to turn to the person next to you and share: What legacy would you like to leave? What would you like to be remembered for? *[Take a moment to reflect on this.]* We will return to those thoughts in a moment.

Now, travel with me to the not so distant past. My face flares the same bright colour as my flaming red hair. Sixteen-years-old sitting at home in Chicago with my family, we are talking about inheritances. My middle-aged parents have years ahead of them before they die and leave anything to me and my brothers. Still, I like to plan ahead, and I look forward to a legacy from mum and dad.

I know our old family story, how upon the death of my mum's father, my parents received a legacy. They used the money to buy a cabin and five acres of property on Chuckanut drive in Bellingham. They carefully enlarged and expanded the cabin. Over the years the value of that property has risen. I know my dad has been wise with his money. He invests in real-estate and now owns property in Chicago. So, sixteen-year-old me looks forward to a legacy from them similar to the one they received from their parents. So, what will I get?

My Dad leans back at the table. He takes me and my brothers in with a slow swivel of his head. With finality in his voice he declares, “The only thing I have to leave to you is my faith.”

My jaw drops. My face reddens. That's it?! With my father's few words, I feel cut-off, denied my inheritance, my legacy. I steam at his seeming hypocrisy: his parents and in-laws left him a legacy, but he will not pass one on to me. Just his faith!? ...oh, please!

Let us leave 16-year-old me steaming and stewing about perceived inheritance injustices and turn to our scriptures.

When we think of the kingdom of Israel, whom do we remember as Israel's greatest king? *[David]*

Remember David's fantastic story? His meteoric rise from obscurity? Where does he start out? As the last and least of Jesse's eight sons, David is relegated to herding the family's sheep. Then surprisingly, at God's direction, the priest, Samuel, selects and anoints David to be Saul's successor as Israel's next king.

Shortly thereafter, Philistine enemies threaten Israel. Saul, still king, dispatches an army to defend the realm. But when the army of Israel arrives on the battlefield the unexpected meets them. From the ranks of the Philistines steps a giant warrior named Goliath.

You know the story...Goliath challenges any warrior of Israel's army to personal combat to decide the fate of the two nations. Fear grips the Israelites. Who can possibly battle this titan and win? No one accepts the challenge. Until young David, the simple shepherd-boy steps up. David, shielded not with the king's armour, but with his faith. Wearing no helmet, carrying neither sword nor shield, armed with only his shepherd's sling, David drops his towering foe with the faith of his ancestors and a well-aimed rock. Proud in victory, Saul elevates David to commander in the army and they proceed to vanquish their enemies, returning finally to Jerusalem for a hero's welcome.

When Saul's throne is finally passed to David, the little shepherd boy takes the seat of power. In the midst of extending his rule over the lands and people around Israel, David wonders, what landmark will he leave? What mighty project will mark his time of reign? Other leaders of other lands have left monuments--to the south the Pyramids and the Sphinx, to the north and east the great Greek temples.

David is smitten, not by the Oepipus complex, but by the edifice complex, a desire to build a temple as his lasting legacy to Israel. In the scripture passage Van read this morning, David consults, for the first time, with his new member of court, the rooky prophet, Nathan. Initially, Nathan supports David saying, "Do what you have in mind for the LORD is with you."

But later that night, God speaks to Nathan, directing him otherwise: "Thus says the LORD, it will **not** be David who builds a house for me. Rather, I the LORD will make of David a house of royal lineage." David's son and successor Solomon will create a "lasting" legacy. Solomon will build the temple for God.

Anybody been to Jerusalem? Did you go to the temple mount? What did you see? Did you see the temple? All that is left... is the western wall, the "Wailing Wall." And that western wall is not the wall of Solomon's temple. That remaining wall is the wall of the second temple, Herod's temple. Solomon's temple... Solomon's temple was destroyed long, long ago.

Lasting legacies. When we think of our own funerals and memorial services, what do we want to be remembered for? Earlier this year, Women's fellowship considered this question in the workshop, *Celebrating Life, Preparing for Death*. What legacy would we like to leave behind? What would we like to be remembered for?

Anyone want to share what they would like to be remembered for – what you shared with your partner?

Thirty seven years ago-- sixteen year old me, I was but a callow youth. What did I know? I so wanted my dad to bequeath to me a portion of the Chuckanut property. What a great legacy that would be, I thought. But my dad, older and wiser, repeating a line that perhaps he had once heard someone else say, spoke the truth to me when he said, "All I have to leave you is my faith."

Last week we heard the story of Elijah and Elisha. The old prophet Elijah, sensing that his time was nearing its end, asks his young apprentice, "What would you like for me to leave you?" And Elisha does not ask for wealth or power, but rather a double dose of the spirit which inhabits Elijah.

Lasting legacies. Receive my spirit. Inherit my faith.

During a recent visit, Ethel Crowe, whom many of you know, reminisced about her time with her sons, especially Randy. She remembered taking him to church camp at *N Sid Sen* for the first time when he was three years old, more than fifty years ago. And through the years, she continued to take him: to family camp, to youth camp, to teen camp... I hear that story of Ethel and think of the lasting legacy she has left for Randy and for us: a love of church camp and by extension, a love of God made known to us through the great outdoors. The legacy that Ethel left to Randy, a love for God's creation, indeed is lasting.

Legacies are not some old idea, some vestige of the past. Legacies are the very stuff of societies and nations. What legacy has the United States created these last few years? How will her citizens today remember her? How will the peoples of the world remember her? Will the U.S. be remembered as a rock of freedom, justice, and democracy? Are the values we live by values that the peoples of the world aspire to?

What legacy have we created for our elderly and our children, legacies in health care, education, the environment? What legacy have we created in our relationships with other nations around the world? Will we be remembered as a nation that stood for democracy, with free and fair elections? Where public office is not passed on from father to son, family member to family member. Where elected offices are not bought. Will our nation be remembered for its fair and impartial legal system, where people are not seized and thrown into prison without charge? Where the privacy of each private citizen is respected. Where a speedy trial and fair punishment are protected under the law?

Earlier this week, the "Wizard of Id" cartoon shows Rod asking the King, "What kind of legacy are you planning to leave, sire?" The king replies, "A lifetime of building projects, Rod." And Rod pictures instruments of torture the king has built: a guillotine, a prison torture chamber and a gallows. What will our nation's legacy be?

I so value the legacy my father promised me, his faith. Today my faith is the foundation for my life, the ground of my being. Not so long ago my mum and dad offered me a third ownership in the Chuckanut Property as my inheritance. I found I did not need it. They had left me enough, more than enough. They had left me a full dose of their own faith, a legacy of inestimable value. My cup overflows.

Solomon's lasting legacy, the temple is... gone. Herod's great temple is... gone, too. And David never got to build a temple! But their legacy lives on in us – their legacy of faith, the faith we learn from familiar stories. The faith we learn through their inspiring words, like in David's familiar psalm that abides with us still... “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...”

Through word and deed, the legacy of faith is passed down through the generations. In the beginning was THE WORD, and the word was with God and the word was God... and today God is still speaking. No matter who you are or where you are in life's journey, you are welcome here.

Our faith, whether great as a mountain, or doubt-filled and small as a mustard seed, our faith brings an ever-loving God near to us. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, God abides with us. That is a lasting legacy to celebrate and to pass on. Amen.

Prayer: God, thank you for our faith. Thank you for those who taught us what it means to be faithful, and for those who continue to show us the path of faithfulness. Forgive us when things of the world glitter and attract our attention, our energy and our admiration. Help us live today and each day so that we will leave a lasting legacy pleasing to you. This we pray through Jesus the Christ, whose legacy is lived out through us. Amen.