

Sermon 7-23-17 Psalm 78:1-7 Leaving a legacy

Dear Receivers and leavers of legacy:

In 1829 a British scientist by the name of James Lewis Macie Smithson left a legacy like few others in history. Smithson was childless and he stated in his will that he wanted everything to go to his nephew, Henry Hungerford.

However, if Hungerford died without heirs then Smithson will said his earthly possessions would go to the United States to establish an institution in Washington, D.C. which would be dedicated to the “increase and diffusion of knowledge.”

Hungerford, the nephew, died without children so in 1835 Smithson’s money went to the US government. The government used Smithson’s money to establish The Smithsonian Institute.

James Smithson left one of the greatest legacies of modern times. His money was used to establish an institution that we have all heard about and that has helped preserve and promote knowledge in history and science.

What are we doing to leave behind when we go on to heaven?

- What legacy are we going to leave?
- What influence are we going to leave to the next generation?

Remember when we as a congregation celebrated our 150th anniversary as a church? That was back in April of 2011. Doesn’t seem possible it was 6 years ago already.

- Look at the photos we still have around here back by the AV center
- Look at the photo of the old church that was used from 1865 to 1961
- Look at the people of our congregation who are the history of our congregation
- What we have here today is what they passed on to us by God’s grace
- For 150 years believers in Jesus have met here in this spot for...
 - Baptisms

- Confirmations
- Weddings
- Funerals
- Weekly worship of the Lord

What are we going to leave behind? What are we going to pass on to the next generation? What influence will we have on the next generation? If the Lord allows the world to last that long and St. John's remains here as a congregation what pictures will be put up in the year 2061 as this congregation celebrates her 200th anniversary? What would the members be saying about us and our legacy 44 years from now?

Think of the legacy Jesus left behind.

- He gathered 12 disciples around him and trained them for 3 years
- He influenced them for 3 years so that they could make disciples of all nations

The Apostle Paul lived to influence others and leave a legacy of faith.

- Paul wrote in I Corinthians 11:1 to the believers: "Imitate me"
- Toward the end of his life Paul wrote to his young co-worker, Timothy, these words: "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." II Timothy 2:2

Paul wrote to another young co-worker, Titus, these words: "Teach the older women to ...urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind..." Titus 2:4

Paul is encouraging one generation to help the next generations.

Leaving a legacy to the next generation is part of our faith. God caused a man by the name of Asaph, who was King David's court musician, to write a song about leaving a legacy. This song is recorded for us in Psalm 78. Asaph and his sons wrote about 12 of the Psalms found in the Bible.

Psalm 78 is a long Psalm. It has 72 verses. We look at the first 7 verses. This Psalm intended to...

- Teach children how gracious God has been to us despite our sins
- Teach the next generation of Israelites so that they would not rebel against the Lord as did their forefathers.
- Teach the next generation the history of the Exodus and their forefather's rebellion against the Lord.

Verses 2-3 mention the phrase "dark sayings" which are puzzling and ambiguous statements. The lessons of history are not easily discerned correctly. The puzzle here is why would Israel have rebelled against the Lord after He had shown them His grace and mercy.

In verses 4-6 Asaph, the author, says he wants to clear the air and tell the truth so that following generations will praise God and not repeat the sins of their forefathers.

The Psalm of the Next Generation

Psalm 78 is called an insight-giving Psalm and is known as "The Psalm of the Next Generation."

Look at verse 6 of this Psalm: "So the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children."

Pass on the faith to the next generation.

God wants us to pass on our faith. He wants us to teach the next generation. He wants us to model the faith for the next generation.

- How do we do this?
- What do we do to pass on our faith?

May we use the time and resources we have right now to serve those around us. We are living in the exact time and place where God wants us. He wants to use us for the here and now. Acts 17:26

The Bible says: “When David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep...” Acts 13:36

Our first calling is to our own generation.

- We are to influence our peers
- But we dare not forget the next generation

Psalm 71:18 : “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation.”

God don’t let me die before I pass on the faith to the next generation.

Our young people are facing a world very much different from the one many of us grew up in. We need to do what we can to prepare and protect our young people.

- Think of what young people are facing today
- Think of the kind of world they are living in
- Think of what things will be like when they become parents and grandparents, God-willing

Where is the faith of young people today? According to a Barna Survey on Christian young people the following results were published...

- 70-88 % of Christian teens are leaving the church by their 2nd year in college
- Over 80% who claim to have faith do not believe in the existence of absolute truth
- 63% don’t believe Jesus is the Son of God
- 58% believe all faiths teach equally valid truths
- 51% don’t believe Jesus rose from the dead
- 65% don’t believe Satan is real
- 68% don’t believe the Holy Spirit is real

Many young people today need to possess a biblical worldview so that they may be able to defend the faith. Many young people need to know there is a battle for their hearts and minds.

Young people who remain in the church said the first thing they do when they have doubts or questions about their faith they talk to their parents. The role of parents cannot be overvalued in helping young people walk with the Lord.

We need to know what our children think and believe.

If we want to influence the next generation, we must care about them. We must care enough to provide our time, talents, treasure and testimony on their behalf.

Psalm 145: “One generation will commend Your works to another; they will tell of Your mighty acts.”

Consider the story of Henrietta Mears

She loved the next generation. She became a...

- Sunday school teacher
- Sunday school coordinator
- Christian camp founder
- Leader of one of the largest high school ministries in America

Henrietta Mears influenced hundreds of young people to become missionaries. One such person was Jim Halbert who learned French and became a missionary to the Ivory Coast of Africa. While there he also learned the local tribe language of a primitive group and lived with them for 28 years. When his work was finished with this tribe, 10,000 of them had become Christians.

Henrietta Mears once wrote that every believer "...must feel that there is a task for them to do, that there is a place marked X for every person in God's kingdom."

We are called to be Christ's servants II Corinthians 5:19ff

Psalm 49:20: “A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish.” God is saying to us: “Understand that part of what I give you is to be used for the Lord's work.”

Do we ever consider how our offerings are being used to help the next generation?

Some years ago in the summer Olympics, the U.S. men's 400 meter relay team looked like they would win the gold medal. The first runner did well and the second runner did well. But when the exchange came between the third and fourth runner, one of them dropped the baton and the U.S. men's relay team came home without a medal.

Dropping batons happens in sports, may it not happen in our churches.

There is an old proverb that says...If you want to be happy...

- For an hour - take a nap
- For a day --- go fishing
- For a month ---get married
- For a year ----inherit a fortune
- For a lifetime ----help someone

May we point the next generation to Jesus as it says in Hebrews:

"Therefore, you who share in a heavenly calling consider Jesus the High Priest of our confession. Jesus the Son of God...let us hold fast our confession for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

"For the first 20 years of our lives we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves. For the next 40 years of our lives we work in the sun to support our family. For the next 10 years after that we entertain our grandchildren. For the last 10 years of our lives we sit on the porch and bark at everyone."

We don't want to bark at people do we?

- Let's pass on the baton
- Let's leave a legacy
- Let's influence the next generation by...
 - Serving them
 - Caring for them
 - Teaching them
 - Investing in them

Why? So that God's kingdom would continue to grow.