

SERMON 5-22-2011 HERITAGE SUNDAY “A RICH HERITAGE-A PROMISING FUTURE”

Matthew 25:31-46

Today we are looking at two themes
Heritage Sunday, and Graduation Sunday

Heritage is usually involved in legacy,
That which we might inherit from family.
Like the family farm, or business, or an heirloom.

Graduation gets you a degree or diploma for work completed.
That why we call it commencement,
Something different is about to commence.
Heritage is looking back.
Graduation is looking forward.

The tassel is worth the hassle.
Theodore Roosevelt said:
Graduation provides a key to open bigger doors.
A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad. ~Theodore Roosevelt

We need both heritage
And a commencement.

I. LOOKING BACK CONNECTS US TO STRUCTURE

Structure give us our identity.
We know if were born French, Norwegian, German, Native American ect.
Our heritage connects us to a certain family.

Even children know this.
Take a little 6 year old boy named Donald.
Who was worried about his first day of school.

He said:"My name is Donald. I don't know anything. I have new underwear, a loose tooth, and I didn't sleep last night because I'm worried. What if a bell rings and a man yells, 'Where do you belong,' and I don't know? What if the trays in the cafeteria are too tall for me to reach? What if my loose tooth comes out when we have our heads down and are supposed to be quiet? Am I supposed to bleed quietly? What if I splash water on my name-tag and my name disappears and no one knows who I am?"

Family is important,
And it's even more important when you
Discover if you were born to a family of sheep or goats.

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Family connections can make all the difference in the world

As to how we grow up,
 How we live our lives.
 Treat one another.
 Handle the resources that have passed through our hands.
 Matters.
 What we believe.
 Whether we have lived as a burden on others,
 Or as a blessing to God.
 Matters.

Chuck Swindoll said the excellent life is possible
 When we stop making excuses, when we

1. Care more than others think is wise
2. Risk more than others think is safe
3. Dream more than others think is practical
4. Expect more than others think is possible.

Shortly after the battles ended the American Revolution, but before the peace had been negotiated, George Washington was with his troops in Newburgh, New York. They began to grow very restless because they hadn't been paid. Washington had begged the Continental Congress to pay the soldiers, but they refused.

Well, some of the officers began to organize a rebellion. They talked about marching on Philadelphia and overthrowing that government and letting the army rule the nation.

With the fate of America in the balance, George Washington made a surprise appearance before these officers. After praising them for their service and thanking them for their sacrifice, he pulled from his pocket a copy of a speech that he wished to read. But then he fumbled with the paper and finally reached for a set of reading glasses-glasses those men had never seen him wear before. Washington made this simple statement:

"I have already grown grey in the service of my country, and now I am going blind."

Historian Richard Norton Smith wrote:

"Instantly rebellion melted into tears. It was a galvanizing moment, and the rebellion..." was put down because they had seen before them a heritage of patriotism and courage. James Merritt, Collected Sermons, www.Sermons.com

This Heritage Sunday connects us to the past.
 So we don't repeat the mistakes and errors of the past.

The United Methodist church was started on a
 Horrible case of heartburn in 1738
 When God fixed for John Wesley what
 All the Tums and Anti Acid couldn't fix.
 When he warmed and healed his heart at Aldersgate.

It wasn't long after that John Wesley started a Methodist society
 At an old abandoned building where they had made cannons.
 This building allowed Wesley's to preach to 1500 people at a time.
 He transformed a war-making factory to a peace-making factory.

If you think about it, there are far more churches and religious buildings
 in the world than military buildings.
 There ought to be a lot more peace being produced than war.

Our of this cannon foundry Wesley developed his base of operations
 One of his ministry was to the debtors prison.
 people were thrown into prison because they couldn't pay their debts.
 If your family didn't bring you food you simply starved to death

Why did John and Charles Wesley get so involved in this debtor's prison ministry?
 Their own father was thrown into debtor's prison.
 And instead of causing them to scratch and claw and keep all they could
 John and Charles Wesley,
 Gave all they could.
 To get others out of the debtor's prison.

What about you,
 What will you do with your heritage?
 Will you let it cause you to be a positive or negative person,
 compassionate or hard nose?
 stingy or generous?

II. OUR HERITAGE CAUSES US TO LIVE WITH CONFIDENCE.

One thing our inheritance should teach us,
 And One thing our graduation should teach us
 Is that we are responsible for our own actions.
 We must live and do what is just and right.
 Because a judgment is coming.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

We begin to understand a bit about John Wesley
 When we remember he was born into a family of 18 children.
 His father was a Anglican Preacher.
 Who was thrown into the Debtors prison,
 Because the church couldn't pay him enough.
 His family struggled to survive.
 So when John Wesley preached on April 2, 1739
 For the first time.
 Guess what his text was.
 Luke (4:17-18).

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:17-18

The same text Jesus read from Isaiah
 You and I are a product of our environments,
 We are all affected by our family, our past,
 Our upbringing.

But both John and Charles fought for the poor and oppressed,
 In 18 century England.

With the emerging industrial economy
 They fought for adequate wages in the factories
 Safety in working condition,
 Protection and purification of water, air, and soil.
 They railed against the exploitation of the poor.
 They lambasted colonialism and the slave trade.
 Concern for the poor became a litmus test for Methodist social witness in his day.

Maybe we as Methodist need to come to a better understanding of the
 Economic system in our day.
 To challenge those things that perpetuate poverty
 That encourage generations of dependent children.
 and lifestyles that perpetually live off the government.
 To engage in ministry that enables person to come back with dignity,
 into Productive society.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
Matthew 25:35-36

Wesley knew that the poor had no access to limited health services available to the rich.
 So in response, he organized a book of home remedies
 called Primitive Physick.
 This self-help book of the 18th century,
 that became a best-seller in the English-language.
 (The 1747 edition of Primitive Physick
 can be read online at the Global Ministries website.)

Wesley insisted that —
 It is impossible to be a Christian without living socially
 in a close relationship with other Christians
 [Source 1739]

The question today is :What is God calling you to do?
 Young people as you graduate and as you began to choose your career,
 What is the driving motivation that pushes you into this or that career?
 Is it ones selfish ambitions? Me- me- me,
 Is it money?
 Is it possessions?
 A big house, big car, lots of electronic gadgets?
 Or is it wanting to make the world a better place.
 Want to minister to people
 And serve humanity?

Is it the Holistic ministry of pastoral care, preaching and counseling missions.
 Healing ministry of medicine, nursing, or dentistry?
 Helping ministry of carpentry and decorating, teaching
 Holding ministry of Plumbing and electricity or computers.
 I call it a holding ministry because when your sink backs up,
 Your pipes springs a lead, or your computer fries,
 You call them up and they say:

Hold on I'm coming.

III. **PAST AND FUTURE ACTIONS WILL BE ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD.**

Note that this judgment has to do with what we have done.

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25

If yesterday's sin had individualistic dimension,
Like lying, theft, cursing, and negligence.
today's sin Wesley said:
has THE SOCIAL consequences.

And the Wesley brother added two more virtues to seven virtues of holiness
chastity, abstinence, temperance, diligence, patience, kindness and humility
gifts to the poor and working to change social and economic policy

There were two transgressions they put at the head of their list:
accumulation of excessive wealth and causing poverty.

Jesus is talking about accountability or the final judgment.

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25:

Some are graduating this week.

What they choose to do with their lives has eternal ramifications.

Actions have consequences.

Souls are in peril, people!

Which will you be

A building or a just a bump.

Lover or a fighter?

If we're not careful our selfish ambitions

Will take over and lead to self destruction.

We will be held accountable.

In the Spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game. But the Orioles' player, John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl.

The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands.

Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse.

Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground.

Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well.

One man's anger destroyed the town.

We have seen it happen in the churches in Aberdeen,
Conflict and division.

People claiming its of God, that they are being led by God,

But it's just selfish pride that was hurt.

If you have come to FIRST UMC to just
 Sit and be fed, to let someone else do the work,
 And not get involved or participate,
 You're in the wrong church.
 IT takes effort to be an active Christian.
 We are a church with a vision
 FUMC also has a legacy.
 a heritage not just of buildings and parking lots,
 But of what we are able to do for the Glory of God,
 inside the building.
 Lives have been changed,
 Commitments have been renewed,
 Bible studies have made us grow,
 Mission trips have opened our eyes.

Whether you talk about our heritage or our legacy,
 the foundation of all of this will be the confession
 that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God.
 without Jesus People are lost.
 Lives get dysfunctional
 Families disintegrate,
 And Peace is gone.
 Sin and guilt rule the day.

But we are here to say and affirm.
 it doesn't have to be that way.

If each of you graduates and every person here
 Steps up to the plate and does what
 God has asked of you to do.
 We can make a difference.

She was just a young Colombian Girl who received a Gideon New Testament in her school.
 She read the New Testament until one day her father caught her reading it...and told her not to
 read it any more because it was full of lies and fantasy.
 But the girl kept on reading. One day her father came home unexpectedly found her with the NT
 grabbed it from her hands and put it in his pocket.
 The father went off to work where he was a mining engineer.
 Several hours later sirens went off in the community there had been a cave in at the mine. The
 father was trapped in the mine. The rescue workers took 5 days to finally reach the men, but it
 was too late. All 31 men died, including the father of this little girl.
 When the workers found her father,
 They discovered that the man was clutching a little NT between his praying hands. When they
 opened the front cover they read a note:
 "To my daughter: Keep reading this NT, it is true and right,
 and one day I will see you one day in heaven.

**One person makes a difference,
 What kind of difference will you make in our world?
 Let's use our Rich Heritage as Christians from First UMC to make a promising Future for
 upcoming generations.**