

HERITAGE SUNDAY ---WATERMARKS

Joshua 4:1-9 HAVE TWELVE STONES.

Today is Heritage Sunday and we celebrate 125 years of ministry in Aberdeen.
As we think of this great church we are reminded
That it takes more than just great programs to build a great church...
we have a great program going on here, but it's not enough.

It takes more than hard workers and sacrificial servants and staff, to build a great church...we have great laity and staff who sacrifice, work and give of their time.

It takes more than a great looking Pastor to build a great church...but you could always pray that someday you'll have one!

If we build Godly people, committed families, and strong homes.
the by product will be a great church.
and all to the glory of God!

When I go into my office, I find that
It's full of mementoes of the past.
I have a frog that came from a mission trip to Belize,
A drum that came from Tonga
A Bible that came from my Grandmother when I was 12
I have a organ pipe that came from our organ.
I have a Doll that came from the Rummage sale.
All these objects trigger reminders to me of life's experiences.
With you and the ministry of this church.
They remind me of what has been.

That is what God intended for the Israelites
as they were about to enter the Promised Land.
The last obstacle to overcome was a flooded Jordan river..
God opened that river and they crossed over.
It was then that God told them to set up a stone memorial as a reminder.
(3) 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.' Joshua 4:3

**Do you think these young men just picked up little stones.
No-- they picked the best and strongest man
Who picked up the biggest rock they could carry
To represent their tribe.**

They carried these stones through the Jordan.
And into their camp.

Vs. 9 Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priest who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day (as a reminded of what God had done.) Joshua 4:9

I. WE HAVE A PERSONAL CHRISTIAN HERITAGE.

Every one of you had have a personal experiences or event with God in your lives or in your homes.

For John Wesley it was Aldersgate street.

Wesley had many religious experiences before this.

You can read it in the paper of his missionary trip to the America Indians.

You would think that was impressive.

But

Listen to his own words of frustration he wrote in His Journal:

"I went to America to convert the Indians, but Oh, who shall convert me?"

Do you hear a sense of emptiness for Pastor Wesley?

He was almost shipwrecked in a storm on the sea

But God wasn't thru with him and on May 24th 1738, at aged 35,

he felt his heart "strangely warmed" while listening to Martin Luther's

introduction to Paul's Letter to the Romans with a group of Moravian Brethren.

He wrote: "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart by faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation. And an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

That was the birthplace of Methodism

When John Wesley's had a personal experiences with the living God.

Do you have that personal experiences with God?

Has your heart been strangely warmed?

We like John Wesley must never forget our first Love.

That is your Christian Heritage?

When Christ touched you.

When the Holy Spirit filled you.

And Jesus entered you and became your savior and friend?

You remember the story of two brothers were convicted of stealing sheep and were branded on the forehead with the letters S T, which meant "sheep thief."

Unable to bear the shame, one brother fled to an another country.

But He was never able to escape his guilt, and he finally died in bitterness.

The other brother repented of his crime.

Stayed at home acknowledged his guilt, and resolved to make amends.

As the years passed, this brother gained a reputation for honesty and kindness.

One day a stranger came to town and asked someone what the letters meant.

The villager replied, "Something happened long ago, and I have forgotten the details. I think the letters are an abbreviation for 'saint.'

We can run and hide.

Or we can face up to the fact of our lives and discover a new way with the living God.

God saved the Israelites from the flooded Jordan..

Brought them out of the wilderness, into the promised land.

And asked Joshua to build a memorial.

So they won't forget that personal experiences with God.

And whenever the Israelites saw the stones they would remember they had not crossed the Jordan on their own strength but because God intervened.

First, the memorial stones were to be a reminder of their own personal experience.

Second They were to be a memorial to their children and families..

II. WE HAVE A METHODIST HERITAGE

the Memorial stones were to serve as a basis of sharing faith with their children (vv. 6-7).

The stones will serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you. What do these stones mean? Tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Joshua 4:6-7

We must pass on to our children what we have found as truth.

Moses warns **“beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Deuteronomy 6:12-15**

I recently visited a friend in Gregory S.D. and high up on the buttes were watermarks.

Watermarks are stone piled in high piles about a 50 yards apart.

You can see them for miles.

They were the original markers the American Indians used to show where water was found.

If you could see the watermarks.

You head toward middle and there you would find water.

Aldersgate is the “WATERMARK” of Methodism great evangelical movement.

When John Wesley life was changed.

The WATERMARK that changed it for Wesley was GODS word.

God's work is our watermark today.

Just as the 12 stones were the WATERMARK for the Israelites.

The BIBLE is the record of Gods love.

Where we find living water.

When we read it.

And Put it into practice.

Our thirst is quenched.

And we discover a new beginning.

The second stage of Wesley's life saw him become England's most influential preacher. He rode over 225,000 miles on horseback, preached 44,000 sermons and establishing societies all over the English speaking world. He personally won 140,000 converts to Christ. Within ten years of his death, one in every thirty Englishman was a Methodist. and six days before his death wrote to William Wilberforce to urge him to abolish slavery. At his death in 1791, he left over 200,000 followers in Britain, Europe and America. His last words were: "**The best of all is, God is with us!**"

The great Watermark or Stones of remembrance Wesley passed on to us was GOD'S WORD and its affect on his life.

It was the same for Moses his great Stone of remembrance was not the burning Bush. It was the word of God coming out of the burning bush. That commissioned him to lead the people of Israel out of Captivity.

The great Scholar Martin Buber after studying the text in Hebrew for many years. wrote that when Moses asked God: What is your name?" God answer, "I am who I am" Buber said we have mistranslated that verse. Instead of translating the name of God as "I am who I am" It should read. **I Shall be There.**

Isn't that beautiful.
God was saying: I shall be there with you in Egypt.
I will be there when you're scared or lonely or depressed.
I shall be there when you face sickness, heart attack, or even death.
I shall be there when you walk through the valley of death.
I shall be there.

That's why Jesus was so strong.
He knew who he was where he was going, and who was going with him.
I shall be there when you go to the cross.
Do you know beyond a certainty who is with you?
Do your children?

LAST:

III. WE HAVE A LOCAL UNITED METHODIST HERITAGE AT ABERDEEN FIRST.

Today we honor memory and the heritage of those first members who had a vision for what Methodist could be in Aberdeen.

1. Coming in 1884 and moving from a tent to a beautiful Permanent structure.
2. From a circuit riding pastor... to a heritage of over 30 some resident preachers.
One of whom in Dick Ward Prayed for us today.
And others of whom will be coming back this summer to preach for us.
3. We have a heritage of strong members, of a Christian education Department and Teachers who started Sunday school which is still rank today as one of the strongest in the Dakotas. The first Class started in 1905 by a group of college women was called the Philathea class. Philathea was a world wide organization derived from two Greek words Philos and Alethis which means "Lover of TRUTH. Their motto was "Win the one next to you." What a great legacy for us.
4. We have had a legacy of great music with our connection over the years to the Northern music department and Presentation. Even today offering scholarship to youth students willing to help us in our choir, music and nursery and child care.
5. We are known for our community outreach and support groups maintaining the balance between evangelism and social concerns. Starting with an original Boy Scout group number #1 which later became Troup #10 in 1910.

John Wesley said "Go not to those who need you, but to those who need you most."
He established credit unions for the poor, free schools and dispensaries,
He attacked factory work conditions and laws allowing economic exploitation,
He spoke and wrote against slavery, war, piracy, gambling and political graft.
All because he saw the cross as the Stone of reminder
And he heard God's Word as a WATERMARK
Of what a Christian out to be and do.
Faithful member of Christ Church.

6. Today we also heard a 50 + year member share her love of the church, and at noon today we have a banquet honoring the 50 + year members who have given and shared their lives, resources, prayer and talents that we might be where we are today.

All of this heritage has not been without cost.
John and Charles Wesley were mocked
in trying to brings life into the church
They were called "Enthusiasts" "Bible Moths" "Reformers", and "Methodists".
All because they sought to educate the poor and illiterate.
To bring Christ to Coal-miners, iron smelters, quarrymen,
shipyard workers, cotton factory hands and servants.
Because Wesley believed we must get involved.
And so must we are.

All our Aberdeen Heritage did not come without cost.
From the Beams in the Attic and its massive DOMES

To its beautiful stain glass windows.
From its former Pastors.
Sunday School Teachers
Christian education department.
It did not come without cost.
Even as Christi died that we might have life.
Did you know that when our building was under construction
a worker was killed when he fell from the dome of our building.
Even this church was built on the blood of another.
It cost a mother her son.
It cost a wife her husband.
It cost God his son.

What are you willing to give to leave this church as a legacy to your children?
I trust it will be your Prayer, your presence, your gifts, and your service.