

## 11.5 Legacy: Purpose

2 Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. 3 The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.”

4 Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. 5 The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know; be silent.”

6 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. 7 Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8 Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” 10 He responded, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.” 11 As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. 12 Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

13 He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

What a great expression of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, to have a Presbyterian minister preach at a Methodist Church during a month dedicated to being stewards of Gods mysteries. This week is the half millennium celebration of the day when a cleric and professor nailed 95 affirmations of faith or thesis to a school door in Wittenberg. These affirmations arose from five central beliefs: sola scriptural, sola gratis, sola fides, sola Christus and sola gratia dei. Martin Luther wrote the words *by faith alone* in the margin of his Bible as a young Augustinian monk. Sola Fide became a central affirmation of the movement that his beliefs unleashed in the midst of the dawn of international upheaval, the movement from a Holy Roman Empire to nationalism.

We too are gathered here on all saints day in the midst of international change. We are witnessing a similar move from a post war internationalism to a growing nationalism. It was in the midst of great change that Luther claimed that only faith mattered. His beliefs formed a legacy for future generations. Luther lived in a time when the future mattered. He knew he was on the forefront of a movement that would change the Church, that would change history. Today some people are rediscovering the importance of the future and are beginning to break from the current preoccupation with living in the present to leaving a legacy for the future.

This morning I have been roped in, no hornswaggled, by your pastor to do just that... to talk about the stewardship of our future ... of our legacy. And I will give you a hint, like any good children's story the answer is ..... JESUS!

For many of us here this morning, in fact about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of us, what we are leaving to future generations is becoming increasingly relevant, for we have lived more years than are yet to be lived. Here in this morning's passage, Elijah is acutely aware of the future and bequests to Elisha his greatest gift, faith and leadership. When we remember our forbearers, deep inside we acknowledge that we too are part of a historical lineage and our lives matter, not just now, but to those who follow. The conversation between Elijah and Elisha is not about money or stuff, it is about Elisha's identity, life experience, his faith. As Elijah's life ends, the focus is on Elisha, the bearer of the future. Elijah grants to Elisha a faith that is great enough to lead Israel. Elijah's mantle of authority is carried forward to shape Israel's future.

For us our mantle of authority, our purpose is handed to us by Christ, through faith. Over the course of years that purpose takes many forms and expressions as we move through the chapters of our lives. For many of Christ's disciples, who have lived in faith for decades, we find ourselves free from schedules, pay checks, bosses and the toil of labor to respond in a new way to Christ's call. In contrast to American culture, our purpose, our call, **our job as a disciple is life long** (actually its eternal). Discipleship actually has the opportunity to expand and flourish after work and children.

You might be one who can look back over the years of your life and recognize how God has been preparing you for this third half of life. What do I mean by the third half, how can that be? The third half is the chapter after retirement which is the longest one in life and the only one that keeps growing longer. Third Half includes stewardship of life, it is that time when we break the bonds of the present pressures and look to how we will make a difference to those around us as we live in this chapter and after we are gone. This includes: Living well, and finishing well. Three ways you can address finishing well is through, End of life planning, completing an Ethical Will and making financial gifts that affirm your beliefs through Legacy giving.

Oak Grove UMC is a church of Active, Searching people. As you live into this chapter of life I hope each of us recognize what God has prepared us for and find ways to live out our call faithfully. Today I invite you to consider the stewardship of your health, your life, and how you want your life to finish. One way to do so is in planning your future, your life, your health and your last days. Health planning is about making plans now so that your family, friends, and those who surround you, will be present to help you when you are in those last days. As a faithful steward of all our years, how we manage our last years is as much about faith as managing all our years.

We live in a time where we can decide how we want our last days to be lived. We are living in a time when our indecision results in catastrophic interventions that can be contrary to our own desires and beliefs and create chaos amongst those near and dear to us. We can make decisions now so that our beliefs are remembered and honored our love is evident and our legacy is integral to our living and dying. It takes prayerful thought, some education and finally some sharing. If how you finish your life is important to you. If you understand that loving and dying is integral to the legacy you leave for others, I have a personal invitation for you. I invite you to talk about your legacy at our home. Just so you know it's legitimate your pastor and a very amazing nurse will join me. And just so you will have a good time talking about your life and last days we will share some good wine and great appetizers.

Like Elijah, the greatest gift we leave behind will not be our stuff, nor our money. It will be our love and faith. How we pass that on is the stuff of honest conversation and planning. My prayer for us all is that as we live into this the longest chapter of life, we live it as people who have a call, a purpose, handed to us by Christ through the hands and hearts of countless generations. On a day when we remember that we are not alone, when we acknowledge that we stand on the shoulders of generations of Jesus' followers who loved the future; it is fitting that we stop and consider our own legacy, what we will give to those who follow. As one of the saints what will you leave as a testimony to your life, your identity, your faith; stuff or a mantle of authority found not in cloth but only faith, sola fides? And as you consider how best to be faithful stewards of the last years of life and

your legacy, please join Vena and I for a conversation about your health, your life and your faith so that your legacy will be one of faith and love.