

10.22.23 – Pentecost 21

“Legacies of Faith”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Numbers 20:2-13 (NIV)

² Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. ³ They quarreled with Moses and said, “If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! ⁴ Why did you bring the Lord’s community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? ⁵ Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!”

⁶ Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. ⁷ The Lord said to Moses, ⁸ “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.”

⁹ So Moses took the staff from the Lord’s presence, just as he commanded him.

¹⁰ He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” ¹¹ Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

¹² But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”

¹³ These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the Lord and where he was proved holy among them.

Leader: These Faith Lessons Are from God! All: Thanks be to God!

1 Timothy 1:12-20 (NLT)

Paul’s Gratitude for God’s Mercy

¹² I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, ¹³ even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all. ¹⁶ But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

Timothy’s Responsibility

¹⁸ Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord’s battles. ¹⁹ Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. ²⁰ Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples. I threw them out and handed them over to Satan so they might learn not to blaspheme God.

Leader: These Words of the Apostle Are from God. All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Dear Lord, we thank you for the legacy of worship experienced this morning, and we ask you to continue to open our minds and hearts to hear a message about faith through our study of the Scriptures. Help us to understand our callings, spiritual walks, and the divine legacy of faith that is this congregation. Our hearts are still heavy Lord in light of the war in Israel and the loss of our good friend, your servant Berniece. Fill us with your divine comfort to cope, and new energy to be ministers in our world. May we hear your Words and your voice as you speak through this servant. Amen.

First of all, I bring greetings and gratitude from our NorthStar Church Network friends for our contribution, and our old translation system! Wayne had loaned it out to NorthStar for many years, and because of technological advances, it was no longer compatible with most church sound systems. So, until we upgrade again, Francis Phan, pastor of the Vietnamese Gospel Baptist Church, will try to utilize it here. The report from the network was productive, and I am happy to share some of their year’s accomplishments at another time, or you can find them online. NorthStar is one of those legacies of faith we’ve supported and helped to build over the years.

This month we have examined “Divine Presence,” “Divine Selection,” and even the “Divine Risk of Faith.” Although today’s sermon title does not use the repetitive word “divine,” it is implied by today’s “Legacies of Faith” reference. According to Merriam-Webster, one legacy definition is “something transmitted by or received from an

ancestor or predecessor or from the past.” For us at this church, many of our parents were Christ followers, so the legacy transmitted to us was faith and the practice of attending church. Not so with many of today’s children or young adults. As we have read and experienced for the last decade or more, the trend is for parents is to fill the weekend schedules and a Sabbath Sunday with sports, family time, entertainment, errands, yardwork, house chores, or school and work preparation for the next week. The church has dropped in priority, especially the Christian church. Gratefully, faith and “spiritual care,” as they now call the chaplaincy program at Inova Hospital, is still around because of you, your legacies, and the legacies of this church.

There are two kinds of Christian legacies of faith in these stories; the first is not so great (unbelief) and the other positive one (deep belief) that lives on in us. And yes, there can be a legacy of sin passed on as opposed to virtue. We have a choice, and generational sin is only broken through divine intervention and a lot of hard faith and therapy work. The Numbers passage is sometimes called the Sin of Moses! If you’re like me, I only thought of Moses as a Biblical hero, until I studied his life a bit more. He was a murderer before he led his people to safety. Through God’s grace he was forgiven and called to leadership, but even leaders fail in some areas.

In this passage, we find ourselves at Kadesh, normally a well-watered garden oasis. Note, coincidentally, that Kadesh is very near the Egyptian crossing into Gaza. You can see a map online if you google Kadesh. During the Israelites’ wilderness journey with Moses and Aaron, out of Sinai heading to the Promised Land, the Israelites stopped for

refreshment, but when they arrived, the oasis streams were dry. As you heard in the passage, the people were disgruntled, so Moses went to the Lord for advice. He was told to speak to the rock to get enough water for the people and their livestock. God was careful to allow his own power to be observed by the people. But for some unknown reason, Moses lost his cool, and struck the rock two times, as if to get water by his own force and will! I think that no matter how strong Moses' faith and God's forgiveness of his past was, as a leader, he was still vulnerable to outside forces. Evil or some say the devil looks for ways to sideline strong leaders, and the legacy of their faith is only the foundation. Daily work, service to others, time in the Scriptures, deep prayer time like Jesus took away from the crowds, and quiet time alone with God are all necessary to sustain whatever legacy of faith one has. Perhaps the leadership pressures and stresses of those thousands of people complaining got to him! It is a hard lesson but a relevant one for all leaders and believers.

Yes, the water came out of the rock, and it was more than enough; but God was so upset with Moses and Aaron that they were punished for their unbelief and disobedience. God interpreted this willful display as disagreement, so the place would later be called "Meribah" which means quarreling. The punishment would mean the brothers would never see or enter Canaan, the promised land, but die beforehand and be buried elsewhere. Moses disrespected the holiness and divine power of God.

We begin some new material today; the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus are called the Pastoral Letters. They were the last things the apostle Paul wrote in approximately 63-66 AD, so they included some concerns or regrets he had. These are different from his other letters like

Corinthians, Thessalonians, Galatians, or Philippians. Those were written to congregations, if you will, or bodies of believers who were meeting in house churches or at safe synagogues. These three pastoral letters were written to two young men and were personal and practical, telling them to stay in Ephesus for their safety. The congregational letters were more scolding and corrective. These, however, represent Paul's legacy of faith, passed down; more like mentorship **instruction** and good advice.

Timothy was the son of a Greek Father and a Jewish Mother, Eunice, according to Acts 16:1 and 2 Timothy 1:5. Paul knew his grandmother Lois and how she had helped to raise Timothy in the faith of Jesus Christ. Both Timothy and Titus had been trusted co-laborers with Paul. These letters are more positive legacies of faith passed down from generation to generation. The first paragraph is a testimonial, to gain Timothy's attention and regard. Paul recognized and repented of his past sin; he accepted God's grace and forgiveness, so he let it go. Then of course, Christ met Paul and, in his conversion, Paul turned everything in his life around to serve Jesus and his teachings. The second paragraph is adoration and praise to God for his life. The last paragraph has Paul calling and advising Timothy to and in the same mission as Christ had called Paul to on the Damascus Road. Paul sees gifts in Timothy that will serve him well, if he adheres to his advice to live a steadfast life, teach sound doctrine, and apply the apostolic authority Christ gave to Paul, who now gives it to Timothy.

What does this mean for us? Time will tell as we continue to move forward doing the Christlike work God has called US to do. I hope you will join me to carry on the work of our faith and ministry, embracing the

legacy of evangelism and service, confident in God's strength and direction. Amen? Amen! //

Please pray with me. Lord and Savior, we thank you for this remembrance of what it means to both receive and to leave a rich legacy of faith. Help us to find open hearts who want to share your love, grace, and mercy. Help us to study deeply the Scriptures, and to pray, and encourage one another, especially in these difficult times. We thank you for this community and your calling on our lives. Help us to share your love, comfort, and mercy with others who need it now more than ever before. In your Son Jesus' name, we pray, **Amen.**