

**Sunday, September 2, 2018 – Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**“A Great Legacy”**

Deuteronomy 4: 1-2; 6-9

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Structure: Process

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Do you, or does someone in your family have a family Bible? I'm not surprised if you do. It's a longstanding tradition for a thick, heavy, elaborately designed Bible to be passed down from generation to generation with the family history recorded within – births and baptisms, Confirmations, marriages and deaths. If you happen to be hold your family Bible my guess is it is one of your most cherished belongings and something you look forward to handing down to your children, some day.

The unfortunate thing about family Bibles is that they can only be passed down to one person at a time. After five or more generations there may be hundreds of descendants and only one can carry this great legacy. There may be a family Bible in your family you aren't even aware of – held by a 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin twice removed who you've never met. As beautiful a symbol as the family Bible is, far more important is the message that Bible shares – any Bible will do – it is the very same message Moses relays from Yahweh in our Old Testament text today – “Do not add to what I command and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you... be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.”

Moses shares this command to a people whose very lives exist because of God's direct intervention. There can be no doubt – the bulk of their diet is comprised of bread called manna that God created. Their water supply while wandering in the desert is supernatural, bursting forth from a rock. God's presence filled a tent in the center of their camp. They have seen these things with their eyes – God has been their salvation. His command – remember! Pass it down! Yes my laws but also my mighty acts that save you. Pass on to your children the special relationship I have – saving you, making you my people, teaching you how to live the best, the most tranquil, the most fulfilling life that will be the envy of other nations who, if you obey my commands will look at you and say, “Wow! How wise – I want that too.”

Generations ago, when many of today's well-worn family Bibles were first purchased by our ancestors the world was a different place. Whatever backward practices like racism and other social problems may have been more common in the past, you have to admit that most people knew the Word of God much better than us today. My guess for most of us, and I include myself in this, if you took your great-grandparents in the prime of their life and put them up against you, for all of our advanced degrees and higher education today they'd run circles around most of us when it comes to knowing Scripture. The command to be careful and watch so that we do not forget what God has done and pass those things on to the next generation a solemn responsibility of every parent, grandparent, teacher and pastor.

Parents, this is your great question: how do we intentionally hand down our great legacy? Are the teachings and commands of God front and center in your family, your church, your community? Are we keeping our eyes on God's mission, and seeing the opportunities before us as God has set us here, in this time, this place, this mission field?

Parents, grandparents and godparents, we have a responsibility to live out our Christian faith with Christ at the center. That's even more than taking kids to church – are we reading the Bible together? Are we attending to our kids' knowledge of Scripture? Do we pray regularly and have devotions as a family? Talk with me, we have some resources for that. Are we as adults modeling Christian life by being active in Bible study, serving in the Church, being good stewards of our finances and possessions and returning a portion from the Lord that He gave us? Do we put God's Word into action in how we live our relationships – husband to wife, parent to child? And as members of our community? Is it obvious to our kids that being a disciple of Jesus is a life-consuming call that takes priority in every part of our lives?

Everyone, parents or not, this is your great question: are we intentionally spreading the good news of this great legacy? Are we burning with zeal and passion as agents on God's mission, sent by Him to bring this legacy to all the world? That modeling is no guarantee a child, or an adult who doesn't know Jesus will now follow Jesus – after all, faith is created by the work of the Holy Spirit... but it is a lot more likely if someone leads them. The question is, what takes first priority? There's a lot of competition out there... comfort, leisure, the mountains, quads in the desert, soccer and softball, band, theater, sleeping in – none of them bad in themselves but

only one thing is commanded by God as the top priority to be taught to your children and their children after them.

When we fall down on this kind of stuff, I think it's because we forget – forget, as Moses warns the Israelites, what our eyes have seen and let things slip from our hearts. The salvation of God comes to us too, not through water from a rock to drink but from promises made in water, not through bread carpeting the desert floor but in bread and wine that bring us the very body and blood of Jesus.

God has given us a great legacy to bestow not only upon our children but upon the many who don't know Jesus, those whom Jesus had compassion on, describing them as harassed and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. That's a legacy far more universal than a single Bible family is handed down to only one heir!

It is the most precious of all things because it promises our eternal inheritance. We are made brothers and sisters with Jesus Himself. Distinctions between wealth and nationality and gender melt away to make us one with Jesus. He gives us not only new life but instructions on how to live the very best possible life here and now, guidance on how to lead our young to be able to avoid some of our own pitfalls in life. Our God is gracious, He forgives – thank God for the legacy left us by our forbearers in the faith, whether our ancestors or some concerned Christian who made a difference in our lives. And may God grant that in generations to come, this great legacy will expand and blossom in the lives of God's people. After all, Jesus' death has won freedom, victory and joy for generations to come, living under His teachings and commands, as well as His promises and grace. Amen!