



*How Do You Want to Be Remembered?*

*II Samuel 23:1-7; Ephesians 5:15-20*

*Sunday, November 25th, 2018 ~ Christ the King Sunday*

*First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois*

*The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.*

*Text: Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the Strong one of Israel. (II Samuel 23:1)*

How do you want to be remembered? I've done a lot of funerals and sat down with a lot of families as we talked about the death of a loved one. I ask about their best memories - those things that epitomized the loved one to them. So, I've thought a lot about that question. If you haven't thought much about that question, you really should. As Robert H. Smith wrote,

The clock of life is wound but once,  
And no one has the power  
To tell just when the hands will stop  
At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,  
To lose one's health is more,  
To lost one's soul is such a loss  
That no one can restore.

The present only is our own,  
So live, love, toil with a will,  
Place no faith in Tomorrow,  
For the Clock may then be still.

I believe that in life we are like a great ship cutting through Life's waters. The wake that we leave behind rocks other boats and eventually washes onto distant shores.

When the last Spectre or Ghost in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol appeared, Ebenezer Scrooge was rightfully apprehensive. He had already seen his Past--the joys, the sorrows, and the life changing decisions that he made. He viewed the Present from a third person point of view. Now he was to peer into the Future, and it frightened him.

"Before I draw nearer the stone to which you point," Scrooge said to the Spectre, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they the shadows of things that May be, only?"

The Ghost merely pointed downward to the grave.

Scrooge continued, reflectively and pleadingly. "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!" he begged.

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

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The book of II Samuel begins with Hannah's poignant prayer for a child. Mary's song, the Magnificat, hauntingly parallels Hannah's. Second Samuel ends with King David's prayerful reflection on his reign. Between Hannah's prayer and David's oracle the human tendency to use and abuse power is a theme that is carried through to David's 'last words.'" In that poetic song of praise, David's sin echoed in the background.<sup>1</sup> David was about to hand the kingdom to Solomon. In the words of that epistle written generations later to a people of faith, he had run his race and kept the faith to the best of his ability. Now the baton was to be passed on to a new generation.

In Hannah's story we become conscious of our utter dependence upon God. David's oracle points to the importance of knowing the source of our strength. Leadership is a gift from God. It is not to be held onto with a clenched fist nor prised from one's hands. Rather it is to be held gently and passed gracefully.

Over a lifetime David learned that in God's Kingdom might does not make right. Rather, God's Kingdom is about justice, mercy, and love. In a reflective moment David acknowledged that God did not determine everything in David's life. It was not God's desire for David to seduce Bathsheba and conspire to have her husband killed as part of a grand cover up scheme. David experienced the consequences of his sin, but in the midst of it all, David also experienced of not only divine justice but mercy and love. "When human intention and action cooperate", someone once wrote, "with God's purpose of justice, mercy and love, then God's Spirit shines in the midst of the world's darkness.

It cannot be denied that David was a flawed man but he was also a "man of God's own heart" Scripture tells us. Flawed, though he was, God was faithful and God's Promises are everlasting.

The wisdom of David in this twilight time is that he now understands and knows that the source of all power and wisdom is found in God. God is greater than our failures because God is faithful even when we are not.

In a world where abuse of power, violence, fear, and war are often couched in overtones and undertones of religion, David's oracle points to a greater reality. This greater reality is reflected in the letter to the Ephesians. As we read earlier,

"Be careful how you live, not as unwise people but as wise men and women, making the most of the time given to you. ...

Do not be foolish. Understand what is the will of the Lord...Give thanks to God at all times and in all circumstances.

So not I circle back to the original question, "How do you want to be remembered?" You are writing that oracle right now, every day, every moment, every second of your life.

"Lord," the Psalmist wrote, "teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12)

In the coming weeks, as we enter the season of Advent, may we learn to "make melody in our hearts and give thanks to God at all times and in all circumstances. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> (Marcia Mount Shoop in *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 4, Season After Pentecost*, "Christ the King Sunday")