

Entrusted

... and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.
2 Timothy 2:2

Please read 2 Timothy today. These are the final words of Paul recorded in Scripture; I imagine that Timothy, the recipient of the letter, reread this letter often. It would equip Timothy for and after Paul's departure. As I read this letter, I consider a life well-lived. Paul loves Timothy; it is obvious. Timothy is clearly called and gifted by God to lead. Paul pours truth and encouragement into Timothy. Paul faced severe hardships in his ministry. Notice in this letter all those who deserted him or came against him. Paul is preparing Timothy for the same. Yet, Paul reminds Timothy that he has been entrusted with the greatest of all messages! Carefully reread 2 Timothy 1:8-14. What Paul taught Timothy was that which was entrusted to him. Timothy was entrusted with the knowledge that God had given Paul so that he could pass it on to someone else who would then pass it on as well. This is God's design—that we are taught and that we teach, in relationships that allow this to happen. Imagine if Timothy had not taken what he had learned from Paul and entrusted it to others. In the relationship between Timothy and Paul, we have an example of a way that the truth of God's gospel is known and spread. We do not know a great deal about how God used Timothy to fulfil the mission that Paul was so sure he had been given but we see that Paul was confident Timothy would prevail in his ministry—because of the power of God in his life. Paul entrusted his teaching to Timothy. This raises a question. Look at the key verse today. It is a command. The things that you have learned you are to entrust to others who are then to teach more people. So, how are you doing in that? Are you teaching others what you know to be true? Is there at least one other person that you meet with regularly so that you can help that person grow? Are you meeting with at least one other person regularly who is helping you grow? What are you doing with the message that has been entrusted to you so that others are prepared when it comes time for your transition?

Saturday, November 14, 2020**Separated**

And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Acts 15:39

Read Acts 14:24-15:41 today. This week we have been looking at transitions. As one would expect, not all transitions are easy—even those in Scripture. The Paul/Barnabas team has been very effective for the gospel of Jesus! Acts 13-14 recalls the impact their ministry had for the kingdom of God. The time comes for them to go out again but this time it is different. A disagreement arises. It is not a difference about theology or about the message that is to be proclaimed. It appears to be a difference of opinion in who to take along on the journey. Mark is Barnabas's cousin. We do not know if that influenced his decision. Barnabas is one who seems to be the guy who will stand up for others—just as he had done for Paul (Acts 4:27). Whatever was involved, it brought a sharp disagreement, and one team became two. There are times when this is how transition happens. There are times when disagreement arises among followers of Jesus. What matters in these situations is how the parties move forward. While Luke does not follow Barnabas and John Mark on their journey, we can imagine that they were faithful in that journey. In later letters Paul will affirm both Barnabas and Mark (1 Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24). It takes passion to follow Jesus with reckless abandon, the way these early missionaries did—passion for the Word of God and passion for the mission. Men and women of passion are inspiring to be around but it can also bring disagreement. Each of these men has a passion for the mission of God—and each is different. It is not that one is right and the other wrong, but they are different. God uses this to double the efforts of these two men in ministry, a transition orchestrated by God for fulfilling his plan for spreading the truth of the gospel. At the end of the day, these men were able to disagree agreeably. This is important: as a follower of Jesus, I must seek him to give me a passion for the lost and for the truth of the gospel that burns in my soul so that I can be about my Father's business. I also must seek that for each follower of Jesus, realizing that, at times, I may not agree with each method, but if I can see that God is moving in the heart of one I disagree with, I must be ready to disagree agreeably so that the truth of Jesus may be proclaimed!


Pastor Chuck Cervenka



Monday, November 9, 2020

Weeping

And there was much weeping on the part of all...

Acts 20:37a

Please read Acts 20:13-38 today. This amazing passage helps us see a group of people saying goodbye to someone they loved deeply. Paul had ministered in Ephesus for two years and his ministry had been greatly blessed by God, so much so that, “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10). Can you imagine what it would have been like to live in Ephesus when Paul was ministering there? He lived among them. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. He planted a church that grew in the love of the Lord. In that ministry, there were elders who he apparently worked very closely with and they became close friends and co-laborers for the Lord. I can imagine that much time was spent in prayer together for God to have moved in that way. When the time came for him to go to Jerusalem, he knew that he would not see these dear ones ever again, so he sent for them. They came to see him for the last time. Paul issued a challenge to them, even as he sought their prayers, to live up to what he had prepared them to do. He reminded them that nothing is as important for each follower of Jesus as fulfilling the ministry received from God (Acts 20:24). He challenged them to complete their mission with reckless abandon, even as he was going to complete his. As their time together came to a close, they prayed and wept. There was no denying that Paul was to go, and there was no denying that the elders were called to remain, yet there would be sadness to be apart, not ministering together, even as each prepared to fulfill the mission they had been given. Consider your mission. What is it that you have been called to do? How have others in your life prepared you to fulfill that mission? As we say goodbye to the Yorgey family, are there any ways that you can continue the work that was begun through them? In what ways has it now been entrusted to you?

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

Taken

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me!”

2 Kings 2:9

Please read 1 Kings 19:19-21 and 2 Kings 2:1-18. Today we look at the transition from Elijah to Elisha. In this transition it can be seen that God is working out his plan of redemption. Elijah, whose name means “the Lord is God,” has been powerfully used by God. But there is a person whom God is raising up to take the mantle of ministry from Elijah. That new man is Elisha, whose name means “God saves.” There is a new unfolding of the redemptive plan of God and that means that there must be a transition. God will come and bring Elijah to himself in a miraculous way! Imagine what Elisha saw as Elijah was scooped up and taken into the presence of the Lord. Elijah had been led by God to choose Elisha as his attendant and Elisha had left everything behind to serve. When the time came for Elijah to depart, he asked Elisha what he wanted. Elisha asked for a double portion of the Spirit. Elisha considered Elijah a father, so he was asking for the double portion of the firstborn son. As he had left everything material, there was no need for a material blessing. But Elisha knew that if he was to carry out the ministry that was being entrusted to him, he would need the power of the Holy Spirit to rest on him. Elijah knew that it was not his decision to make, but God’s. As Elijah was lifted into the presence of God, Elisha received the request and was empowered for even greater ministry than that of Elijah. Those who looked on could see the power but needed to see for themselves that Elijah was truly gone—they had not seen the chariots. Once they were sure, they followed the man of God as well. Consider the plan of God. He is sovereignly working a great plan and he is moving people to fulfill his plan on earth as they obey his call. Who is one that has gone before you? What have you learned from that person and how are you passing it on? If you were one of the fifty who were following, how would you have responded to the new man God had empowered?

Wednesday, November 11, 2020

With you

Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

Joshua 1:5

Please read Deuteronomy 34 and Joshua 1:1-9. This may be one of the most significant of all transitions in the Bible. Moses is a specially chosen man of God. He was used by God in a powerful way, as God chose him to lead the Israelites out of the captivity of Egypt. Notice Deuteronomy 34:10-12: *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.* Moses knew God face to face—he had unrestricted access to God’s immediate presence. Look at all that was done through Moses! None like him. But Joshua was the one chosen by God to take the people into the Promised Land. God decreed that Joshua should be the one. Joshua had learned from Moses how to talk with God, how to listen to the voice of God. He learned from Moses how to lead the people for God. You can see it in the way that he leads. God tells Joshua that just as he had been with Moses he would be with Joshua. I imagine that would be a great relief for Joshua. Leading this people into the battles necessary to take the land of promise would be very difficult. They were not a people who would readily listen and obey the voice of God, yet Joshua, empowered by God, was able to do just that. An amazing transition and, once again, we see that God is ensuring that his plan will prevail. He is the one who orchestrates and oversees these transitions, preparing successors and their followers. What are some things that you have learned from those who have gone before? What impact have men and women of God had in your life? What have they taught you and how are you living it out? Have you learned to seek the Lord by using your unrestricted access to God’s immediate presence? How does that help you know that God is with you?

Thursday, November 12, 2020

Sent

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:1-3

The transition Luke writes about in these verses is significant for the Gentiles. In fact, this transition and the selflessness of the Antioch church is a large reason the Church is what it is today! Barnabas and Saul were key figures in the Antioch church, having ministered there for at least a year, Barnabas as a prophet (one who declared the truths of the Lord as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, illuminated by the Holy Spirit), Saul as a teacher (one who instructed and passed on the apostolic teaching that he had received). They were apparently used by God in a powerful way in Antioch. This was a praying church, one that would have times of worship and fasting, seeking the Lord for his direction. During one of these times, the Lord revealed his plan to call Barnabas and Saul to other ministries. The church responded by more fasting and prayer and sent the two off to the ministry God had for them—an amazing example of church growth, of understanding the call of God on the Church. The Church is called to go into all the world with the gospel of Jesus. Antioch is an example of a church focused on the mission. They came together in pure worship but they realized that others needed to learn about Jesus so they could worship him as well. This seems like a selfless act, as I imagine both men were very special to the people and many tears were shed as they left; but there was also great assurance that this was the hand of God. I praise God for their obedience. History reveals the amazing impact this sending had for the kingdom of God. I praise God as well for the obedience of our church family—and the Yorgey family. Clearly, we are to send them off to the work to which God has called them—and so we are. I am confident that the church of Antioch remembered the teaching that came to them through Barnabas and Saul just as we will remember the teaching that has come to us through Tim and Allison. May God use it in our lives to draw us to continue to serve the Lord.