

Faith for God's Future: passing on the spiritual baton.

Psalm 145:1-7, 2 Kings 20:12-19

One generation will commend (tell) your works to another: they will tell of your mighty acts, they will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty, they will tell of the power of your awesome works 145: 4-5). Here in Psalm 145 is the OT equivalent of the Great Commission: the passing on of the spiritual mantle to a new generation. An intentional act that lies at the heart of the Body of Christ and its intergenerational identity. Dorking URC, in 2014 you stood at the spiritual crossroads and made a choice for change and growth. Now I believe the Lord requires from us a renewed commitment to a new generation.

There's a shocking story, recorded in 2 Kings 20:12-19 about King Hezekiah. This man, who reigned from Jerusalem, was one of the rare Kings of Judah who actually loved God and sought to live for Him. He removed the idols, was obedient to God, and experienced significant levels of God's favour and success during His reign. But then, as so easily happens, he got a little proud. 500 miles to the east, the King of Babylon had heard about the incredible city of Jerusalem where Hezekiah was enthroned. Intrigued by rumours of Jerusalem's glorious palace and temple, the Babylonian King sent a team of ambassadors to personally investigate, under the guise of bringing good wishes and gifts to celebrate Hezekiah's recovery from a recent life threatening illness. When the ambassadors eventually arrived in Jerusalem, King Hezekiah didn't hold back in showing them **everything**. He proudly gave them the tour of the temple, the palace, and the armoury -every significant and impressive part of the city. The bottom line here: **he was showing off**. There's absolutely no sense that he was giving glory to God for any of it.

When the ambassadors from Babylon had seen enough, they returned home. As they were leaving, the prophet Isaiah decided to pay Hezekiah a visit. "Who are these guys heading out the

door?" Isaiah enquired, his voice loaded with concern about what just happened. "They are men from the distant land of Babylon who travelled just to see me and my Kingdom. Do you realise how famous I have become?" Hezekiah replied. (OK, so if you read the text he doesn't exactly say this but trust me, that's what's in his heart). "So, what did you show them?" Isaiah asked, already sensing that a word from God was about to burst out of his mouth. **"Everything!"** Hezekiah announced proudly. "I showed them everything!" And with that, the Spirit of God stirred Isaiah that he could not hold the word from God any longer. "And the Lord tells you today Hezekiah that the Babylonians will return. And when they return they will take **everything**. It will all be carried off to Babylon. And what is not carried off will be destroyed. **And while this won't happen until you've passed away, this is the legacy you leave to your children. Your children will be kidnapped, tortured and taken captive to Babylon. This is the future you have created for those who follow you.**" Wow. How would you react to a word like that? If God told you that after you have died an invading nation would come to your community, steal everything of value, destroy everything else and more importantly, take all your children away and torture some of them. How would you react to a word like that? Hezekiah's response is totally shocking: "this message you have given me from the Lord is good." Good? Hezekiah, are you serious? Why do you think this is good? The text in verse 29 gives us the answer. Hezekiah thinks to himself "at least there will be peace and security during my lifetime." Can you believe this? Hezekiah has just been told that in the coming years his community will be destroyed and his children snatched away. Yet all he can think about is himself. "At least I'll be OK", he thinks. I'm sure you're as horrified as I am by Hezekiah's indifference to the future he has created. Yet it's still true today that many people just don't care about the legacy they're leaving behind. As

long as the Church is there to bury me....Our Consumerist society thrives on mantras like "live for today", and "buy-now, pay-later". But the future matters. Our indifference is not the only reason why we don't create a better future. Now ***I choose to believe that most people care about the future, but a great future won't happen by chance.*** We have to be intentional. We have to be committed. But the enemies of such a commitment - indifference, lethargy, complacency, forgetfulness...dare I say laziness - all too easily conspire against us. If we're not careful, we too could end up as a bunch of 95 year olds looking back at our lives and thinking: "I wish I'd done more." Hezekiah had no sense of commitment to, or concern for, the future generations. It's as if he's thinking to himself: "This world is going to get worse....but it doesn't matter because I won't be here." That's not the attitude that God wants us to have. He wants us to be committed to building a better world for future generations. To give them a great inheritance; to leave a positive legacy. That's the spirit that gave birth to a congregational fellowship in 1662 and that's the spirit that has sustained it over the last 355 years. Leaving a positive legacy: the consequence of not doing so can be immense. If something of the Hezekiah spirit has seeped into your Spirit I appeal to you today to wake up, repent, and renew your commitment to leave a legacy for future generations. So, give us an example of how we do this you say....

In 1 Chronicles 17 David, Israel's most beloved King, decides that he needs a temple for God. David feels bad that he's living in a beautiful palace while God is still being worshipped in a tent. So, David informs the prophet Nathan of his intention to build the world's greatest temple for the One True God. At first, Nathan thinks this is a fantastic idea and cheers David on; God has other ideas, and that night speaks to Nathan in a dream. The following day, Nathan returns to David to give the news: "David, the Lord God says to you today: 'I chose you to be King of Israel, I've

always been with you and I still have great plans for the rest of your life. But - you're not the one to build this great temple. After you have passed away, your son and heir will do this." Now David had a choice! Will he be like Hezekiah and not care what happens next for his son? After all, David really wants to build the temple. Some of us might have expected David to say something to his son Solomon along the lines of: "Son, I really wanted to build this temple but God says I can't and that you're going to do it. So, I'm going to leave you to it. Best of Luck." But David isn't like Hezekiah. Five chapters later we read of David's response to God's plans in 1 Chronicles 22:5: "David said, 'My son Solomon is young and inexperienced and the house to be built for the Lord should be of great magnificence and fame and splendour in the sight of all the nations. Therefore, I will make preparations for it.' So, David made extensive preparations before his death." Did you catch that? "David made extensive preparations before his death." David was committed to doing everything he possibly could to set his son up to succeed. He wanted to leave a best legacy - the brightest future - for his son. This cost him a lot: time, money, talent, energy, passion, probably more than a few tears....the list goes on. Check that word "extensive" again; it literally means abundant, numerous and multitudinous!

HEZEKIAH gave NOTHING

DAVID gave EVERYTHING

HEZEKIAH lived for TODAY

DAVID prepared for TOMORROW

HEZEKIAH was SELFISH

DAVID was SELFLESS

You get the picture? So, the question is, who are you going to be? Hezekiah or David? Your decisions about the future matter! We have it in our hands to pass on the spiritual mantle, to disciple a new generation for Jesus and if we don't do this then we stop

being the Body of Christ and default to a mere religious community.

Dorking URC, as your Pastor, I need to know you are committed to passing on the spiritual baton to a new generation and the mantle of faith to your Joshua. The Elders as they pray and plan towards the future need to know that you are behind them heart and soul. Regardless of what our eyes tell us we need to look with the eyes of faith to the commission of Psalm 145:4: one generation will commend your works to another. This call echoed in the Great Commission: to be and make disciples, is at the heart of the purpose of the Body of Christ generally and West Street in particular. We have begun a journey of faith and are being called upon to sow the seed of the gospel into a new generation, and like David, the King, such a sowing will cost us dearly and we may never personally see its harvest: but God's promise is that the harvest will come.

When the Elders met together for a day in April the Lord began to put flesh on our general vision of Mission (reaching out with the gospel of grace to those beyond our walls) and Discipleship (pouring our lives into fellow and new disciples). Over the past three years He has shown us the mission field on our doorstep and as we have obediently reached out, we have encountered seekers (now I believe He says Enlarge the place of your tent: Isaiah 54).

So, today I am calling upon you all to lay down your lives afresh for His purposes, to leave a spiritual legacy of prayer, mission and discipleship, thus ushering in a new generation for Jesus. The physical fabric of our buildings will always be a constant challenge which we will no doubt overcome but I am asking you this morning: will you invest in the spiritual fabric as a congregation and leave a legacy for the next generation.

If God is so calling you then I encourage you in your heart/spirit to take a step forward to, as it were, throw off the spirit of

Hezekiah and put on a David spirit for the best temple we can prepare for in Dorking is one where a new generation of children and young people, seekers and saved, are being ushered into the Kingdom.

Pastor David

May 7th, 2017.