



Poland Presbyterian Church

At the Green since 1802

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Sixth Sunday of Easter

Psalm 145: 1-7

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Leave a Legacy of Love

Psalm 145: 1-7

*I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name for ever and ever.
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.
One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

The Psalmist wrote: "One generation shall laud thy works to another". On Mother's Day our focus is on the generations and the maternal and nurturing gifts that we have received from the previous generation. It is a day to express our gratitude, but also a day to examine our own lives and the impact we will have as we nurture future generations.

"One generation shall laud thy works to another."

In preaching, I have often shared anecdotes about family members, usually my father or one of my siblings. Seldom have I mentioned my own mother. She was born on a dairy farm in Western New York. She went to college to become a music teacher, but never graduated. World War II and a young family interrupted her plans to teach music. The Second World War gave many women of her generation the opportunity to work and hone skills outside of the home. My mother worked at the Air Force base in Tucson, Arizona as a radar repair technician. During the war she received two patents for repair devices that she invented. She also had the distinction of working on the DC-4 Skymaster aircraft that Roosevelt presented to Winston Churchill. She installed a double thermostat in the plane's refrigerator, so that Churchill's "beverages" were kept at the temperature of his preference.

My mother had amazing technical and problem solving abilities. When we built our summer home, she did all the electrical wiring. She never, however, lost her interest in music and we children grew up, spending 2 ½ months of every summer at Chautauqua Institution, near her childhood home. She dragged us, often screaming, to symphony concerts, operas, and live theater. I will say that neither my mother nor father were outwardly affectionate, but I must acknowledge the legacy of love that she left for me and my other siblings. My love of music, and my problem solving and technical skills were nurtured by her.

One of the very special things that my mother gave me right before she died was an afghan blanket. She never threw out anything. She saved all the woolens from my childhood, carefully took them apart, saving the yarn, and crocheted it into an afghan blanket. This blanket became a metaphor for understanding my own childhood. Threads of stories and events were crocheted together to create something meaningful... the blanket contains my story. I am grateful for those gifts. They are a legacy of love from my mother.

On this Mother's Day, I want to talk about 2 legacies: The ones we have received that have nurtured us and enabled us to grow and mature. And the ones we will leave to future generations that will nurture them.

I

We all have received a legacy from previous generations. Think, for one moment, about the legacies of love that have blessed your life. The obvious ones are our parents, but there are so many others.

- The teacher who took an interest and encouraged you to pursue a path in life that led to where you are today.
- The youth group leader who gave up time on Sunday evenings and many a Saturday so that you had some guidance and a support group that kept you on a purposeful direction in life.

Most of us have been the recipients of legacies we can't even begin to count. In my life, there was Mrs. Hoffman, a 5th grade substitute teacher for only one week. She was recently widowed when she showed up for a week of substituting for Mrs. Feldman's 5th grade class in 1962. She returned to teaching, presumably to make ends meet. She was the first adult who challenged me to consider some type of profession that would make a difference in people's lives. She planted the seed of my call to ministry.

There was Mr. Pierce who advised the youth group. We were cleaning the church cemetery on Saturday in the spring of 1966, and he said, "I like the way that you are working, Brent." He will never know how important those 9 words have been to me: They affirmed my ability to do something that helped and made a difference. Work could be purposeful!

There are also people in your lives who have nurtured you and enabled you to grow and mature. Their lifelong impact is their legacy.

At the heart of these legacies of love is the conviction that there is something more important than the moment; something that is enduring; something that is worth sacrificing; something that is worth preserving. On this Mother's Day, I am grateful for the legacy of love that I received from my mother, but also for the legacies of love that I have received from innumerable individuals whose paths have crossed mine. We have all received a great deal from previous generations. My prayer is that in this age when we expect so much, and believe we are entitled to so much... my prayer is

that each of us will cultivate a grateful heart: a spirit of humble thanksgiving for what we have received.

II

Churches and congregations exist because of the sacrifices made by faithful members and the legacies of love they left. I read in the psalm today: "One generation shall laud your works to another". Look around this room. The stained glass windows, the woodwork, the organ, the piano, the chapel... most of these things (which we often take for granted) were gifts given to the glory of God by present and past generations. Their generosity indeed lauds God's work to our generation.

This past week, I attended a meeting of the scholarship committee of this congregation. In nearly 40 years of ministry, this is the first congregation that I have served that has offered scholarships to student attending college. Presbyterians are characterized by the value we place on higher education. Poland Presbyterian Church takes that norm one step further and assists young adults as they continue their education beyond this community. It is a legacy of love.

"One generation shall laud your works to another".

Many of you are aware that we have an endowment fund here at PPC. It is made up of gifts and bequests that members have made either through vehicles of trust or their will. It is wonderful to have, but did you know that it funds over a quarter of the church budget? This endowment has enabled the church to endure some difficult times... The generosity of the past (and a robust stock market) is enabling us to offer the rich program we do now. We need to be good stewards of this legacy and all that we have received from our ancestors in the faith. We need to use it in a manner that preserves it so that it will bless future generations as it has blessed us.

"One generation shall laud your works to another."

How do we respond to the many legacies of love we have received? We respond with gratitude. We say thank you. This day is set aside to show our gratitude toward mothers who nurtured us, but also those non biological "mothers" (and sometimes they are men) who nurtured with values, with education, with the ability to live more fully in God's creation. We show our gratitude by "paying it forward:" pondering and planning the legacies that we are creating now and will leave to future generations.

III

What is the legacy that we will leave? Will it be a legacy of love? Will it nurture future generations? The legacies we leave are not always financial. Most of us complete a "will" to ensure that our worldly goods are distributed in a manner that we want. The document is called, "last will and testament". I would encourage you to write a "testament": a paragraph, two paragraphs, a couple pages a chapter.... Write something about what ultimately matters to you, and perhaps what doesn't. Share with future generations within your family, the events that shaped your life, your values and your faith. Share with them the hopes and the disappointments that were part of your life. Share with them in writing how much love them. This a legacy of love that your loved ones will treasure forever.

There are other legacies that we can leave. Teaching or helping out in Sunday School, with a youth program, an afterschool program leaves a legacy. Mentoring a confirmation student is a nurturing gift that will shape the character of young adult. There are so many different ways to touch the lives of future generations.

It is mother's day and I am grateful for the legacy of love my mother left to me. In the spirit of that gratitude, I am planning to leave a legacy that reflects the values and faith she nurtured in me. I encourage you also to prayerfully consider your legacy. May it reveal the gratitude you feel for the legacies of love that have nurtured you. May it "pay forward" the debt of gratitude we owe our mothers, and all the others, male and female, who have nurtured us.

One generation will laud God's works to the next. Amen.