

“Legacy”

2 Chronicles 1 and 12

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First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood

Dr. Jim Davis

I want to start out my sermon by giving a little quiz this morning. Don't worry! The quiz has only two questions. And if you need it there's a question at the end for extra credit. So are you ready? Good! Here we go.

If you had to sum up the life of Solomon with a single word, what word would you choose? Do you have one in mind? Good!

Then let's keep going. Can you spell Rehoboam? Spelling ancient Hebrew names isn't your best subject? Well then, it's probably a good thing there's an extra credit question. And let's make it easy. Let's make it just like the first.

If you had to epitomize the life of Rehoboam with a single word what word would you choose? Well you probably think I'm being tough on you with all these questions, so let me tell you why I'm asking.

You see recently I came across some words about the legacy of each of our lives. The words were in a newspaper editorial, “Every person,” the editor wrote, “creates a legacy by which they'll be remembered. Their legacy is a function of all that they've done and all they've achieved. It's tainted by all their failures and missed opportunities. And ultimately it's constructed by everyone who was impacted by their dreams and actions.”

Now that's not a bad definition of a legacy. At least that's what I thought when I first read it. But then I remembered something. It was something we read in Storyline, a few weeks ago. It was what God told Samuel to help guide him towards David. Remember? “The Lord sees not as man sees,” God said to Samuel “for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

Now I might as well come out and tell you, I want to talk to all of you this morning about the legacy you're building, the legacy of your lives. And I don't want to talk about your accomplishments. I want to talk about something else. I want to talk to you this morning about your heart because I'm convinced in God's estimation that

the legacy that really matters isn't the one that shaped by your achievements. It's the one that's shaped by your heart.

And to illustrate the point, I want us to look again at the legacies of Solomon and Rehoboam because they are crystal clear examples of this truth. So let's go back and take another look at both their lives through the lens of the stories we read about each of them in our Scripture lessons this morning.

Solomon's story comes first, for 2 Chronicles is a book about David's descendants and in that storyline Solomon comes first. But it's interesting to see the first thing that the writer of 2 Chronicles wants us to notice about Solomon. It's not his wealth or his wisdom. It's his worship. Before we can see that however we need to fill in a little background.

The very first words that we read about Solomon in 2 Chronicles are these. "Solomon, the son of King David, now took firm control of the kingdom for the Lord his God was with him and made him very powerful."

And the words we need to notice in that sentence are the words "firm control" and "powerful." They're almost synonymous. And whenever you come across an expression that's almost synonymous in the Old Testament, it's almost always there for the sake of emphasis. In other words, they're meant to stand out.

They're the words the author wants you to hear. So when 2 Chronicles says that Solomon was now in "firm control of the kingdom" and "very powerful" he's underlining a fact he wants you to understand. Solomon was now in a position few of us will ever be in. He was in a position to do whatever he wanted.

He didn't have any more rivals and he had a whole kingdom at his disposal. It was time to start building a legacy. Maybe he should build a temple first, or a palace or a fortress. But curiously, before he starts building anything, Solomon starts off on a journey, a journey to Gibeon.

And there in front of the Tabernacle, the tent that Moses made for God in the wilderness, Solomon performs his first official act. He walks up to a bronze altar and makes a sacrificial gift to God. It's an act of worship. It shows the commitment of Solomon's heart, to give ultimate worth in his life to God. And after all that's what worship is all about. It's not about the action. It's about the heart.

Oh, I know, I know it's easy to get hung up on the numbers in the story, for the sentence says that Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings to the Lord that day. But trust me folks. It's not the numbers that matter to God. It's the heart.

The truth is the numbers are really as large as we think they are. For the book of 1 Chronicles tells us that when Solomon was publicly proclaimed as king in Jerusalem, before his journey to Gibeon, not one thousand but three thousand burnt offerings were made.

No it's the size of Solomon's sacrifice that catches God's eye. It's the size of Solomon's heart. For here is a man who now has "firm control" over a whole kingdom, a man who is at the height of his power and at the height of his power when he could choose to do anything, he chooses to worship God. It's all about the heart.

This week in the book of 2 Chronicles we're going to read these words, "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth in search of someone who will fully trust Him." And right now, standing in front of the Tabernacle at Gibeon, Solomon is that someone.

He has every reason to leave God on the sidelines of his life at this moment. He has things under control. He can do anything he wants. He has the power. He has the position. He has the resources.

But right now, at this crucial moment in his life, Solomon decides what he most wants to do, what he most needs to do is worship. He wants to leave his mark on history. Make no mistake about it. But he knows the way to leave a mark on history is to start by leaving a mark on your soul. He goes to Gibeon. He makes a sacrificial gift. He gives ultimate worth at this moment in his life to the Lord and He worships Him. It's all about the heart.

So where's your life this morning? And where's your heart? And if someone were to take a look at what you've been doing with your life lately, over the past few days or weeks, what would they see? What would the record show? What's been worth your time? What's been worth your effort? What have you given ultimate worth to? What have you been worshipping? Where's your heart?

And before you take time to really think it through, let me talk to you a little bit more, not about Solomon this time but about his son Rehoboam. Incidentally, just for the record, I can never spell his name from memory either! But if you need to know it's Rehoboam. I looked it up again, just before I came in to the service!

The interesting thing about Rehoboam though is that his story starts off differently. For Rehoboam's first journey is not a spiritual journey, it's a political journey. It's not made in an attempt to worship God. It's made in an attempt to gain political capital.

Second Chronicles says that when he became king, Rehoboam went to Shechem in northern Israel to try and head off a potential revolt. But instead of heading it off, he precipitated it.

It's only the beginning of what one author calls "a legacy of loss" left by the life of Rehoboam. And the legacy continues with the story we read this morning. I wonder? Do you remember how it starts? Because interestingly enough, it starts with almost the same words as Solomon's story.

"But when Rehoboam was firmly established and strong ..." "Firmly established"; in other words at the same point in his life as Solomon had been when he had "firm control." "And strong"; it's another word for "powerful" the word that was used back in chapter one.

Now notice the next few words of 2 Chronicles. Read them slowly and carefully. "But when Rehoboam was firmly established and strong he abandoned the law of the Lord." In other words at the same moment in his life as his father had experienced years before Rehoboam's heart moved in exactly the opposite direction. It didn't move towards God in worship. It moved away from God in forgetfulness.

And that move makes all the difference in the world to Rehoboam's legacy. Instead of a legacy of success like Solomon, Rehoboam's legacy turns into a legacy of loss. Oh, I know there were moments in his life when it looks like his heart turns back, but in the end they're only moments. And moments in your life don't make up your legacy.

No, when Rehoboam needs to, politically, he's willing to share in a corporate prayer of confession. But his heart isn't in it. Not really. It's a religious ritual; he's willing to go through with it, but seeking to be in a real relationship with God,

seeking to give God ultimate worth in his life, it's just now where his heart is at. So the final words the author of Chronicles writes over Rehoboam's life and legacy are these words.

“Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen from among all the tribes of Israel as the place to honor his name ... but he was an evil king, for he did not seek the Lord with all his heart.”

You see folks, with God, it's never about your accomplishments. It's always about the attitude of your heart. So those questions I asked you a few minutes ago; let me run through them with you one more time.

Where's your life this morning? Where's your heart? If someone were to take a look at the events of your life recently, what would they see? What would the record show? What's been worth your time? What's been worth your effort? What's been taking first place in your life? If you want to leave a legacy behind you of success not loss, those are questions worth pondering.

Let's pray