

## **Children’s Moment**

Good morning, girls and boys. We pray for you every day and hope that you are well. There’s a lot that can make us sad. It’s hard to know what to do. Sometimes, we feel like crying.

**Do you cry?** It’s okay to cry. Let me tell you about a time when Jesus cried. “When Jesus was living on the Earth, he had three very good friends, two sisters and a brother. The sisters were Mary and Martha, and the brother was Lazarus. They were BFFs.

**One day, Lazarus got very sick.** He was so sick his sisters were afraid. They sent word to Jesus, but by the time he got there, Lazarus had died. Mary was crying. Her sister Martha was crying, too. They were very sad, because they loved their brother very much. When Jesus saw them, he cried, too. Crying is a good thing to do when we’re sad. If we didn’t cry, we’d still be holding onto the feelings that come out with our tears.

**Jesus and his friends cried.** But they didn’t just cry. Mary and Martha were upset. Martha even yelled at Jesus! Sometimes when someone we love dies or is hurt, we feel sad and angry. Jesus still loved Martha even after she raised her voice, because that’s how it is between friends. When our friends are sad because someone has died, one of the best things we can do is just listen to how they are feeling.

**I want you to know it’s okay to be angry, just like it’s okay to be sad.** When you feel angry, you can tell someone you trust. Just remember you’re not angry with them! Sometimes when we’re angry – well, almost every time – we can feel it all over our bodies. That’s a good time to go for a walk or a run, or to ride your bike really fast (just be sure you put on your helmet...) or to punch a pillow, or even to ask a grown-up if you can do something fun.

**Just be sure to talk to somebody.** Even if you can’t tell them too much about why you’re angry, the people who love you will want to help.

**You can talk to them, too, if you don’t understand why a sad thing happened.** When someone we love dies, we all wonder why it had to happen. We understand people’s bodies sometimes get sick, but it feels especially bad when it happens to someone we love. After someone dies, people like to tell stories about them, about the things they did and the

people they loved. Those stories might make us cry a little at first, but the next time we tell them, we may start to feel like smiling when we remember. And that’s okay, too.

**God sent Jesus to be with people and help them because God loves us so much and wanted to be closer to us.** God understands how we feel when we’re sad, because God remembers what it was like the day Jesus cried about his friend.

**One of the ways we can feel closer to God when we’re sad, or we’re angry, is to pray.** We close our eyes and make our minds quiet, and then we talk to God. It’s okay to pray out loud or to pray quietly, so only God can hear.”

*Let’s pray ...*

*O God, we thank you for loving us, even when we are angry. We thank you for loving us, especially when we are sad. Help us to talk to you and to talk to each other about the way we are feeling. We ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://marthaspong.com/2014/03/06/when-jesus-cried-a-childrens-message-to-accompany-john-111-45/>

**Message: “God Hears Their Cries”**

**I want to start by giving credit where credit is due.** The current “Legacy” sermon series was recommended by Annilia Wright-Moseley, our candidate for ordained ministry. Thank you, Annilia.

**This theme fits the season.** It’s a natural follow on to the question “where do you find hope?” which we explored last month. In the fall, our thoughts turn toward household traditions like Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. The electoral cycle will conclude. A year will pass since the first indications of COVID-19 appeared.

**We enter this period with a lot of uncertainty, doubt and a lack of trust.** We don’t if we’ll be affected by the pandemic or if our loved ones will suffer. We don’t know what the aftermath of the election will be, regardless of who wins. We’re uneasy with the state of civil unrest and the need for balance between justice and security. We wrestle with inequality and prejudice, looking for answers that make sense, leaders to unite us. We are crying out for mercy which only God can give.

**{For those interested in reading more about the statue of distrust in American society,** here’s a reference to an article Karen Eagans sent <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/10/collapsing-levels-trust-are-devastating-america/616581/> }. Let me know what you think.

**Our legacy is part of this context.** Webster's Dictionary defines legacy as “something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past.”<sup>2</sup> Some common examples of legacy are: a legacy of money or assets; leaving children a legacy of love and respect; conflict which leaves a legacy of pain and suffering; and an artistic legacy we pass on to others.

**Last week we began to examine our legacy by looking at the source of life in it’s fullest: God.** God invites us into a relationship. There are several metaphors we often draw on to illustrate the richness and depth of our spiritual life, our faith in Jesus. The Lord’s Table (communion), the community of faith (baptism) and a covenant relationship (marriage) are three key examples. They are good, healthy practices.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-kind-of-legacy-are-y\\_b\\_951633](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-kind-of-legacy-are-y_b_951633)

**God doesn’t use shame, guilt or fear to goad us into a relationship.**

God wants us to freely and willingly believe, receive and pass on our blessing to others. That’s the way communities of trust are born. It’s a healthy way to live, spiritually and as a whole person. We’re part of a community. We find an identity, acceptance and meaning to life.

**This week we’re going to look at the nature of what we pass on.**

Lisa Haisha, host of The Legacy Series, asks this question:

“Have you ever thought about the legacy you’re leaving your family, your community, your world? Most people never give it a second thought. But a legacy is something you’re creating every day, whether you realize it or not.”<sup>3</sup>

**Ms. Haisha goes on to talk about two aspects of life that sound very familiar.** What we pass on to others, our legacy, can have positive or negative aspects. For those who remember our bucket-filling series in June 2018, each person has an invisible bucket – let’s call it our soul or spirit. Each of us also has a dipper. We can dip from another person’s bucket or fill another person’s bucket. When we dip from another person’s bucket, we dip from our own. When we fill another person’s bucket, we fill our own. Filling a bucket is a positive emotional action. Dipping from a bucket is a negative emotional action.<sup>4</sup> What we choose is what we pass on to others, whether we realize it or not.

**I believe our legacy, what we pass on to others, is like that.** To use some churchy language, that’s what it means to pass our blessing on. Ms. Haisha agrees. Lisa cites two examples: Oprah Winfrey and one of Lisa’s clients, named Sarah.

**“Oprah Winfrey has been a pillar of kindness and has stood for truth, education, and giving back.** She’s one of a kind. Millions of people tuned into her show for over 20 years. During her farewell show, Jada Pinkett Smith said, “Oprah, you never had children but you mothered millions.” Madonna said, ‘People always ask me who I admire. I always say, “living or dead?” There are many diverse dead people I admire. Alive? Just one person - Oprah Winfrey.’”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Material drawn from Rath and Clifton, How Full is Your Bucket?, Gallup Press, 2004, p. 25*

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit., Huffpost*

**Lisa also had a fifty-something client, who she called Sarah, “who was the antithesis of Oprah.** Sarah had a troubled childhood. Her mother was an alcoholic and her father was absent from her life. Sarah ended up having three children out of wedlock and felt she had to abandon her children so she could make a living.

**To hide her pain, Sarah couldn’t help giving unsolicited advice to everyone she came in contact with.** We’re talking everyone ... cashiers at grocery stores, salespeople in the mall, and strangers she’d meet. Yet, Sarah couldn’t get her own life together. She hid behind criticizing others and focusing on what the world wasn’t accomplishing so she wouldn’t have to look herself in the mirror.

**Every area of Sarah’s life was unfulfilled.** Out of need, she entered into a marriage of convenience. Sarah had no close friends. She was a hoarder, she was depressed, and she suffered from low self-esteem. Sarah couldn’t trust others, so her business ideas could never take off. She couldn’t stay connected to her kids because she felt ashamed of her lack of money and success. Sarah desperately wanted to create a life she could be proud of before she died, but she didn’t know how to make that happen because of all her internal pain and her internal dialog telling her how stupid and worthless she was.

**Sarah died in her early sixties.** Sarah’s legacy was an unfulfilled life, without ever being able to give herself or her children the love they needed because she was so stressed out, sad, and ashamed of her lack of money and success.”<sup>6</sup>

**We have a choice: we can leave a positive legacy or a negative legacy.** You get to choose. Most people never choose one way or the other. It just happens to them. That’s how Sarah lived her life.

**Jesus said, “*treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you*”** (Matthew 7:12). Jesus starts by telling us not to judge others, because none of us are free from things that blind us to our own wrongdoing. When Jesus tells us to “*ask, seek and knock*” (v7), he’s telling us to be intentional in the way we seek to follow a positive narrative, the way we care for others trusting God to care for us.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

**I encourage you to decide what matters to you.** If you trust God, be intentional about it. That’s what faith is. It’s how we live a life with purpose and meaning. It’s how we forgive and show compassion.

**Ms. Haisha offers three questions to help you decide what your legacy will be.** Answer them honestly to create a legacy that matters and endures.

- “Twenty-five years after my death, what, if anything, will those beyond my family remember me for?”
- If I had to give everything I own to a cause (not a person), what cause would that be?
- If I could snap my fingers and acquire an experience or talent, it would be \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.”<sup>7</sup>

**I offer a fourth question:**

- Other people would describe my relationship with God as \_\_\_\_\_ based on \_\_\_\_\_.

**These questions sound simple,** but when it comes time to answer them you’ll realize each question requires much thought. Most people have to think about the questions for days before really knowing the answers.

**Remember, it’s not what we leave FOR others that matters; it’s what we leave IN them that matters most.** Possessions and wealth don’t really make a legacy. It’s about leaving behind the essence of your soul, a positive deposit in their spirit from your spirit. That’s what the world needs from you. Serve others by leaving behind the best and most beautiful parts of you. Today, and every day, create your legacy.

**You can give others life. You can give others hope.** You can pass on a positive legacy through faith in a God who is love. I invite you to reflect on the questions and share with others in your groups this week. If you’d like to share what you’ve learned with me, please send me a note or give me a call.

**Most of all, I encourage you to connect with your family, friends and neighbors.** Let’s start living with positivity and hope, one step at a time. Share what you receive and pass it on. **That’s a wonderful legacy.**

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

**Psalm 106:1-6, 43-46 (CEB)**

Praise the Lord!

Give thanks to the Lord because he is good,  
because his faithful love endures forever.

Who could possibly repeat all of the Lord’s mighty acts  
or publicly recount all his praise?

The people who uphold justice,  
who always do what is right, are truly happy!

Remember me, Lord, with the favor you show your people.

Visit me with your saving help  
so I can experience the good things your chosen ones experience,  
so I can rejoice in the joy of your nation,  
so I can praise along with your possession.

We have sinned - right along with our ancestors.

We’ve done what is wrong.

We’ve acted wickedly.

God delivered them numerous times,  
but they were determined to rebel,  
and so they were brought down by their own sin.

But God saw their distress  
when he heard their loud cries.

God remembered his covenant for their sake,  
and because of how much faithful love he has,  
God changed his mind.

God allowed them to receive compassion  
from all their captors.

**Matthew 7:1-12 (CEB)**

Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. You'll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt out to you. Why do you see the splinter that's in your brother's or sister's eye, but don't notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother or sister, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when there's a log in your eye? You deceive yourself! First take the log out of your eye, and then you'll see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's or sister's eye. Don't give holy things to dogs, and don't throw your pearls in front of pigs. They will stomp on the pearls, then turn around and attack you.

Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door is opened. Who among you will give your children a stone when they ask for bread? Or give them a snake when they ask for fish? If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. Therefore, you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.