

Lent II *Psalm 22:30-31* Posterity will hear of Him – or will it?

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Posterity will serve Him: future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim His deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that He has done it. (Psalm 22:30-31)

Nearly forty years ago, Kurt Kaiser wrote a popular Christian folk song entitled “Pass It On.” What is the “it”? What message are we passing on to others, especially to our children and to future generations?

On several occasions God told the Israelites to erect monuments of stones commemorating His miraculous deliverance. These monuments served as visual aids, prompting fathers to pass on the message of God’s salvation to their children and their children’s children.

The celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Atlantic District provides us with opportunities to review similar monuments to God’s grace and goodness as we recall His faithfulness over the past century. The history of the Atlantic District is a celebration God’s life-changing love, transforming many churches from a homogeneous group of German Lutherans into a kaleidoscope of multi-cultural believers praising God in many tongues

Yet, we miss the mark if we spend this time of reflecting on monumental milestones while missing their real significance. A fixation on the past is unhealthy. We are not to stay and worship the monument, but simply see it as a sign post pointing to the Source of our salvation.

Reflection can lead to quiet gratitude or joyful exultation, but reflective considerations of the past can also be painful as we see our shortcomings as a church. Where are we today? What’s the status of our Synod, or more importantly of our churches within the Atlantic District?

Rising deficits and declining numbers in churches and schools have led to the termination of ministries that were thriving just a few decades ago. Other churches and schools teeter on the brink of extinction. From that gloomy context, what is our legacy to future generations? Are we passing on a message of despair and irrelevance in today’s world?

It’s easy to recognize failures in the church at large: the self-destructive back-biting within Synod or a maintenance mentality that resists change. As a church, we have been reluctant to risk all in following Jesus, putting aside personal preferences and tradition in an all-out effort to reach the lost.

But let’s not conceal our own sins under the cloak of corporate repentance. What about us personally? What opportunities have we missed because we fear the “giants in the land” by focusing on our deficiencies and forgetting about the sufficiency of God’s grace?

- Forgive us, Lord, for our timidity, our negativity, our complacency and resistance to change
- Deliver us from misplaced pride in past achievements, focusing on ourselves rather than on our Savior
- Forgive us for passing on a message of defeat, rather than the Good News of victory in Jesus.

This recognition of our failures and subsequent repentance is a significant legacy to pass on to future generations. Repentance leads to a renewed relationship of dependency on our forgiving Savior. As we experience God’s amazing grace; we are challenged to renew our commitment to lose ourselves in Jesus, stepping out in faith and trusting in God’s unfailing promises.

God’s promise to us is as sure today as it was a century ago, and that promise continues for future generations. He is our Savior, and He will never abandon His people. In that renewed hope and confidence we move forward into this second century of the Atlantic District, joyfully telling what our Lord has done, is doing and will continue to do for and through His people. We speak of Jesus who covers our failures with His grace, fills us with joy, equips us for service, and empowers us to embrace the world with the Gospel of hope. Pass that on!

- Tom Roemke