

“The Heart of Heritage”

I don't know if you noticed this morning when you came in, but we have a new addition to our sanctuary. I want us to take a moment to contemplate all that it is. Let me start by explaining a little bit about it. About 18 to 20 months ago, at a worship team meeting we were trying to come up with ways to get the worship service to be a more accessible. How could we help people connect to the service a little bit better? I did a little research and brought the idea of a prayer mosaic to the group and we decided to go forward. I knew that Sue Nelson did a lot of glass work and approached her with the idea. We talked logistics and glass and glue. The idea was that as a person were to glue a piece of glass to the larger piece they would voice a silent prayer and lift their cares to God. The thought was that as we are all broken as individuals, we come together to make something beautiful. Now, I would like for you turn towards the back of the sanctuary and see what all the broken pieces of ourselves and what our prayers became. I will give us about 15 to 20 seconds of silence to contemplate.

As you begin to settle back in your seat, I will recall a couple of weeks ago that Candice and I were watching “The Great Pumpkin.” Linus after getting chastised by Charlie brown made a very astute observation. He said “I have learned never to discuss three things in public. Religion, Politics or the Great Pumpkin. Today I am going to break a couple of those rules. First, let me explain a little bit about the great pumpkin. Just Joking.

However, as we talk about our broken pieces and our broken selves being displayed for the world to see, we must talk about our faith and in turn, as much as I don't want to talk about it, there is an election on Tuesday that we must consider. Before you all go running out of the sanctuary, I am not going to talk about who to vote for or why. In my opinion it has been decades since people giving sermons had any real power over who their congregation votes for. But I do contend that our politics are broken and that is a direct reflection on us...more on that later.

Let's wander back to the heart of heritage for a few minutes. You may not know it by looking, but that piece up there is far from perfect. It is itself broken. Let me explain. It was supposed to be one big piece of glass, not the sections it turned out to be. When I bought the big piece, I put it in the back of our Durango, took it home and went to get it out of the back. As I lifted it, I must have picked it up by a weak spot. It cracked and broke into what I thought were unsalvageable pieces.

I called Sue in a panic. Her calming voice assured me that my broken pieces could be made into something whole. It was then that we decided to do it in smaller pieces. I only had to buy one small pane of glass to make it work. In the end, I cannot imagine this being any other way.

Because of the way we cut the glass, we needed those silver braces which meant we could not glue glass to the edge of every piece. We needed room for the bracket. I used painters tape to mark the edges and it was going smooth until I got in a hurry and forgot to tape a piece. Sue caught it after the piece was completely done with glass pieces glued all the way to the edge. Again, calmer heads prevailed. We talked through measuring and getting a new piece to replace it, but I again used the internet to do a little research and found an option to break down the glue we were using. I took it home and several days of soaking in acetone later, the glass was ready to use. We brought it back and started over. It just meant that more prayers got to be lifted up to God. He was using this vehicle to heal wounded souls and bring us together.

One last anecdote about the mosaic. We slated this project to be done for Easter...6 months ago now. It was certainly a bigger project than we thought. It took volunteers to cut colored glass pieces, it took folks to glue the glass on to the other glass. It took putting it together like a puzzle, soldering it together, grouting and hanging. I don't remember a single part of the entire project that went as planned exactly.

I want to take a moment this morning to acknowledge what all went into the "Heart of Heritage" project. If you did anything to help prepare the project, or get it ready for the congregation to start playing with glue, please raise your hand and keep it up. If you took the time to cut little pieces of glass, raise your hand and keep it up. If you glued a piece of glass or more and lifted someone up in prayer, raise your hand and keep it up. If you know someone that glued a piece of glass, raise your hand and keep it up. If you helped put the finishing touches or hang it up, raise your hand and keep it up. If you are a guest today, raise your hand and keep it up. And finally, if you don't have your hand up, raise it and keep it up. Look around now. Everyone is a part of this project. Be it in a small way or a large way, we are all part of the "heart of heritage."

You can put your hands down. What is my point to all of this? My point is that everyone who has walked through the doors of our church is a part of our heart. They are, and you are a part of our legacy.

I have a hypothetical question for you this morning. Have you always acted like everyone is a part of our church heart? As in the scripture this morning, have we always turned the other cheek? Have we always treated others the way we want to be treated? In every church, there are people that disagree with you politically. I have even heard of churches where members left a congregation they had been a part of since they didn't agree with the politics of the pastor. If that is true, if those people believed that the pastor was wrong, is that a reason to break off from a family? Even if you consider the family dysfunctional or broken, are broken people a good reason to leave? Is a difference of opinion a reason to create a divide? As we look at the Heart of Heritage, it includes these people too. It represents our past, our present and our future.

I have noticed, probably because of social media, that as a society and as a nation, it seems as if we are becoming more and more divided. We have stopped seeking out alternate view points, we have started to find communities where everyone thinks just like we do and everyone else is simply wrong. We have become a nation of pointing out the parts of others that are broken. This election cycle reminds me of this. My social media is filled with pictures telling me why what I believe is wrong and why I am dumb because I believe what I do. I am right, you are wrong and there is absolutely nothing in the middle.

I remember growing up, that my house was always filled with debate, it was filled with a difference of opinion. I remember disagreements about who to vote for among friends, I remember disagreements about how to approach a variety of topics. You know what happened at the end of every one of those debates? A drink, a handshake and an agreement to get together again soon. Opinions were challenged and that is an OK thing.

As we leave today and peer up to the heart, I want us to remember that individual pieces of glass brought us together. We as a community make something out of scrap, something broken became whole. It would not have been possible without every prayer that was lifted up. As we look around us in the coming days, weeks and months, I ask that we all remember that as individuals, we are all broken. Together, we make something whole. God heals our souls and he brings us together. No matter the results of congregational meetings, fund raisers, the vote on Tuesday, let the "heart of heritage" represent all that we can be together. Our hearts are bigger; our lives are more connected and we are better individuals when we recognize everyone for their individual talent and find ways to become something more than what we are alone.

I want to wrap up my message today with a short prayer before we join together in a hymn about being better in our faith.

Dear Lord, Today, we want to raise our hearts up to you as broken as we may be. We know that in you we become one. In you we come together to make something more than we could ever hope to be on our own. We ask today that you bless the “heart of heritage” and take every person who comes into our sanctuary and show them your love, your power and your ability to make broken people whole.

Amen