

**"The 'Truth' About Life After 60"**

Pastor Mathew Magera – 10/3/21 – Sermon 488

St. Mark Lutheran Church, Lindenhurst, IL

To God be the Glory!

I have to begin by saying thank you for the invitation to be a part of this milestone. I am so glad to be back here at St. Mark. I would not be the person I am, in the vocation I'm in, without having had people here to know and learn from, Bible believing pastors who love and preach Jesus. I may live and serve in Pittsburgh but I still consider St. Mark to be my home church and I am honored to be here to share God's Word and promise with you today.

60 years is something definitely worth celebrating. In fact, in my preparation for being here today I decided to do some research on what I should know about life after 60. I quickly realized I was not as specific as I should've been in my query because I kept on getting advice about hearing loss, skin changes, heart troubles, vision loss, achy bones and joints, loss of bladder control, balance problems. I immediately told myself to be more specific in my search. Then I thought, I'm so glad I'm still 35.

What does it mean to celebrate 60 years? What does it mean to celebrate an anniversary? An anniversary is a celebration of something that has led to this moment, it is the moment itself, and it is the hope of many moments to come. The anniversary of a church is such a celebration. We are always, at every moment in our life as the church at the end of something God has done that has led us to where we are, in the middle of something God is doing right now, and at the beginning of something God is about to do.

So, as we are on the brink of stepping off into the future, what is it that should be on our minds as St. Mark celebrates 60 years but also as the individual people of God who continue to confess Jesus as Lord in a world that continues to put pressure on the church? What is our truth about life after 60?

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The book of Deuteronomy is a unique book. It's 34 chapters worth of Moses giving a series of long farewell sermons and speeches. This in and of itself makes the book special because if you remember when God was looking for someone to go before Pharaoh in Egypt, Moses responded to this by saying, "God, I can't do it. I can't speak. I'm not good at making important speeches." What's he doing in Deuteronomy? He's making important speeches. I love God's sense of humor.

So, this book of Deuteronomy is essentially Moses standing before God's people, reiterating to them what God has done, what God has said and passing it onto the next generation. Why is he doing this? Because the previous generation had all died after they had left Egypt. The people needed to be reminded of these things. There comes a time in life when the new generation needs to hear from the previous generation about what God has done. This is why I love how the church is built up of veterans in faith right alongside those who are new to faith. The older and the younger generations together. Moses speaks to the people of God to give this new generation an anticipation, not to just look back at what God has done but to look at what God is doing, and to anticipate what God will do, to give them a hunger for seeing God's work to be in the first person so that they might say I want to hear and see for myself what God will do.

Deuteronomy highlights a healthy model for our lives, especially at anniversaries. We should always look to our past, reflect on what God has done. We should also tell of what God is doing now. We should never forget about the future because what has been won't ever hold a candle to what God is going to do. We, as Christians, truly know the best is yet to come.

But, let me show you what the church is up against. Do me a favor, everybody put your hands out in front of you like I'm doing right now. This is for everybody, go ahead put your hands out. Now, place your palms facing each other, thumbs straight up in the air. Now, turn your hands upside down so your thumbs are facing the floor. Good. Take your hands and cross them over one another. Then, interlock your fingers. I know this might be a bit difficult for some and you have to look to make sure you've got it every other finger but give it your best shot. Now, what we're going to do here on the count of three is

slowly turn our hands so our thumbs are face up again. Ready? One, two, three, turn your thumbs face up. Wait, what happened?

I love to use this as an example to show the world's power in the church. See what just happened, how you listened, how you watched, how you acted, and yet, how you were distracted, deceived, and how you ultimately failed. The church exists in a world that continues to work on distracting and deceiving the church with a false truth, with false teachings leading us to a place where we think we can go and yet how its false truth gets us stuck every time. We, as the church, need to be able to stay attentive, to remain grounded so that we are not distracted or deceived. Fortunately, I think Moses has some great words that we can use for this very purpose.

## **REMEMBER**

Moses is directing the people to what God has done for them and is shifting in to saying what God is doing and wants to do with this generation. I'm going to start near the very end of our reading. Deuteronomy 4:9, Moses says, "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life."

How do we remain the church in a world that distracts and deceives? What is our truth for life after 60? Moses says, and this is my first point, remember. Remember. Remember what God has done for you. Remember the ways you have seen God's presence evident in your life. Remember the faith into which you were raised, baptized. Remember those times God spoke to you when life was rough. Remember the pastors God has put in your path to help lead and guide you. Remember the words "given for" and "shed for" you in Holy Communion. Remember the good things God has done for you.

I want to show you something of mine that is very important to me. This right here is a Bible. Actually, it's a New Testament. It's a New Testament written both in the English and Japanese language. Before you ask, no, I don't know Japanese. This book sits on my desk back home in my office in Pittsburgh. This book is important to me not just because of the words written inside it but because of a few items that are inside it. You'll see here I have my baptism certificate. February 23, 1986. I have my confirmation certificate. October 29, 2000. But, I also have an envelope. Inside the envelope is a picture of me and my grandpa on my baptism day and a note he wrote to me. I won't read the whole note but there are a few words in it that I do want to share. He's talking here about how he can't give me much, but there is something he can. He writes, "the one thing I can do, is to pray that God will give you the gift of faith in the living Lord Jesus, God's only Son, our Saviour." These items, these certificates, this letter, are my reminder of what God has done for me in Jesus' death on the cross.

Remember what it is that Jesus did for you, how he saw you dead in your sin and how he willingly and purposefully went to the cross for you. Do not forget the work of Jesus. He's saved you from your sin. It's forgiven! He's saved you from the grave. Amen and alleluia, yes? Remember.

## **RETELL**

Going further into verse 9, Moses says, "make them known to your children, and your children's children." Remaining the church in a world that distracts and deceives, we remember. But, here, as Moses directs us, we retell. Retell. We want to remember what God has done in our lives and then we want to tell those things to our children and our grandchildren.

I can't tell you the pressure that I feel as a dad to raise my daughter in the love of Jesus. There are days I say I just can't do this and I'm doing a terrible job and yet there are also those moments where I marvel at what she knows. We were at a church camp about a month ago that a bunch of Lutheran pastors in our area put on and I was watching one of the pastors teach the lesson for the day and Skye was in the midst of the crowd of kids and when the kids were asked questions, she'd be right there with the answer. In my head I'm thinking, yes, I actually did something right. It was a proud dad moment for me right there, to know that the way that I live my life, the words that come out of my mouth, the things that I teach are sticking.

It is so important that we pass on what has been passed down to us. I think back again to that note my grandpa wrote to me 35 years ago and the only thing I can think to say is “thank you.” Thank you for passing on this good news. I would not be where I am without it. And it’s not just Moses encouraging us to tell it to our children and our children’s children but the entire Bible outlines this. Psalm 127 tells us that children are a heritage from the Lord. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” I like that. Train up a child in the way he should go. You know that word, train? It’s the Hebrew word Chanak. It literally means to stimulate the taste buds. To put something into the mouth. To feed. I learned this week that this word is very similar to an Arabic custom where you would take a drop of date honey and place it onto an infant’s lips. Apparently this starts the sucking reflex. It stimulates the taste buds and teaches them to feed. Train up a child, stimulate their taste buds for the Lord. Lead by a godly example, show them what you’ve seen, tell them what you’ve heard. They are the Lord’s heritage.

The easiest way to stop the work of the Holy Spirit in our children and grandchildren these days is to neglect sharing this with them. Do not hold it back. Do not keep your mouth shut. Retell it.

## **RADIATE**

For this last point, I want to go back a verse or two. Starting at verse 6, we read, “Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?” Remaining the church in a world that distracts and deceives, we should remember, we should retell, and lastly we should radiate.

Moses is telling God’s people, “other nations are going to be checking you out.” Moses is telling them that other people are going to see how you have incredible wisdom and understanding. They are going to see that your God, the one true God is near to you, comes close to you. Their false gods didn’t do such things. These other nations would look at God’s people and think, hey, something is different about them. Your God is different than ours. Your people are different than ours.

This world that we live in now may very well distract and deceive but they are watching Christians. They are watching them closely. You can see that by the number of scandals that come out in the media, how much hypocrisy is reported in the church. People are watching the church. What then should we do? Should we live like hypocrites? No. Should we live scandalous lives? No. What should we do? We should radiate the love of God in all that we do. Live your life like Jesus. Imitate him.

I was listening to a colleague of mine a couple weeks ago and he brought up those bracelets everyone used to wear back in the late 90s, you know those, WWJD bracelets. Do you still have one of those? They were everywhere. WWJD, am I right? It guides us through life. We approach different situations in life and we go, WWJD? What would Jesus do? How do we respond to what it is that we are facing in a way that radiates Jesus in what we do? What would Jesus do? It’s a great question. So this colleague of mine talked about how these bracelets were great in the 90s but today, now, especially in 2021 we probably need a new bracelet. WWJD won’t cut it anymore. We need a new bracelet. And on that bracelet, we would read HWWK WJWD IWDK WJD. How would we know what Jesus would do if we don’t know what Jesus did? Think about that. How would we know what Jesus would do if we don’t know what Jesus did? Doesn’t really fit on a bracelet, does it? But, how can we radiate if we don’t know what it is that we are radiating? And what do you know that leads me to my fourth point which is to remember, and my fifth point which is to retell, and my sixth point which is to radiate. It keeps going. It’s a cycle. Remember, retell, and radiate. Remember what God has done for you in Christ, use that as ammunition with which to retell it to your children, and then radiate the love of God in your daily life. Remember, retell, and radiate.

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Moses stood on the plains of Moab overlooking the Promised Land, looking intently at the future God was giving his chosen people. Moses stood there but he turned and he faced the people and he spoke.

He spoke to this new generation of people who would be the ones inheriting this future, the future promised them by God many years back. Here stands St. Mark on the verge of the future God is providing. In many ways the situation is the same. To have come this far is an achievement for which only the Lord is responsible for. But, if you think about what this church was like 60 years ago and then think about where it is now, you'll see what I mean. That generation that gathered together 60 years ago is not the same generation that is here right now. Some may still be here but the majority of you were not part of this church 60 years ago, nor was I. But, like God's people ready to inherit the future God was giving them, here we stand ready to do the same.

Moses stands up before the people and he speaks. He speaks of what God has done to lead the people to this point. He speaks about what God is doing right now. He speaks about what God will do for them in the years to come. Here you are today, God's people here at St. Mark, ready to inherit what will come as we pass the 60 year threshold. Moses' words are still true for us today. Remember, retell, and radiate. That's the truth about life after 60. It's the truth for life after 50, 75, 100, or even 150. Remember, retell, and radiate.

I said earlier that we are always, at every moment in our life as the church, at the end of something God has done that has led us to where we are, in the middle of something God is doing right now, and at the beginning of something God is about to do. Are you ready to take that step into the future and see what it is that God is about to do? Do me a favor, stick your arms out in front of you, palms facing in, thumbs up, and watch closely. Now, close your fists, thumbs still up in the air. Are you ready to see what God is about to do? Two thumbs up, that's what I like to see. You can put your hands down. Well, I hope you're ready. If the past is any indicator, and it is our best indicator, of what is to come, I can't wait to see what God is going to do. To God be the glory, now and always. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Some ideas and concepts throughout are taken from a study given by Skip Heitzig.