

What Will Be Your Legacy?

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You know, I believe one of the reasons that that which we just sang, it so resonates in our hearts is because it's lifted right off the pages of Scripture. There in Revelation 5 it says those that are gathered around the throne of God, they cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come." What's interesting, though, about that passage is it says, "and they sang a new song." As much as we love to claim cultural relevance, as much as we love to say that we are up-to-date on so many things, can we be honest this morning that we struggle when God says, "I want to do something new" in your life? We get used to the old, we get used to what is comfortable but today we're going to talk about potentially God doing something new in our lives, that which we haven't thought about, that which we haven't seen, that which has not be materialized in our lives. So let's pray today that it won't just be let's just be comfortable with what's been happening but let's look forward to what is new.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we come to this time of being challenged, being convicted by your word, Lord, your word makes it very clear that your mercies are new every day and, Lord, we've come to celebrate that. We thank you for the days gone by, we thank you for this day in the present but God, give us the vision, give us the hope, give us what you desire as we go forth and, Lord, if it is a new song and if it is a new direction, and if it is a new way, Lord, may you empower us with your Holy Spirit to simply walk where you've called us to walk. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Church family, today is a special day in the life of our church. Those of you that are guests or visitors with us, you may not realize that today we celebrate 30 years of continuous ministry in one specific location. We'll deal with that a little bit later but that is a rare item today. But what we celebrate today many of you became aware of a few weeks ago, maybe a couple of months ago, but 18 months ago, the very first time Mike King and I had the opportunity to sit down face-to-face he made it very clear, he said, "Jeff, my redirection in life is not a matter of it, it's simply a matter of when." And over the last 18 months, I've had the privilege of watching and listening because one of the things that has continually gone through my mind these last 18 months is on that day in my life, what will that look like? What will it look like to look back on 30 years? What will it look like and what will be there, what will be lasting? And the word that has come to my mind over these 18 months is the word "legacy."

Now the term "legacy" by definition just means "that which we leave behind; that which follows us thereafter." Now we're all the byproducts this day of an incredible legacy. This weekend we celebrate the legacy of those who were willing to serve on our behalf in the Armed Forces; those who were willing to leave family; those that were willing in some cases to give of their lives. The freedom that they were willing to go and engage and fight for, we have the privilege of enduring that legacy today. We're the beneficiaries of legacies financially. We're the beneficiaries of legacies in all capacities of life, those that have gone before us in various capacities, but today I want to talk about the most important legacy: spiritual legacy. And as we celebrate 30 years today in one life, I'm going to ask you a very pointed question: what spiritual legacy are you leaving that will be celebrated 30 years from now? Those that come before your children, your grandchildren, your coworkers, your neighbors, those who you do life together with. I want to talk about legacy. I want to talk about what are we leaving behind not with our bank accounts and not with our businesses, what are we leaving behind spiritually that will be lasting.

To do so, I want to encourage you to turn to John 11, and for those of you that are guests of our fellowship today, we have been very slowly and steadily walking through the Gospel of John over the course of this year and I want you to know that when I put this plan together, when I began to take the passages of John and break them up across the calendar year, I did not know that this day would be the day that it is but what a providential day in this passage because when we get to verse 47 of John 11, we find ourselves – listen – in a time of transition. In fact, we find ourselves in the Gospel of John, this is a time where we're going from one phase to the next because up until this point the earthly public ministry of Jesus has been on the forefront, from the turning of water to wine until what we studied of Lazarus being called forth from the dead. When you get to chapter 12, now we're in that Passion Week experience, the anointing of the body of Jesus, the washing of the disciples' feet and ultimately the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But in these last 10 verses of John 11, we have a group of people that have gathered together, they are scribes and Pharisees and even a man by the name of Caiaphas, and what is on the line in this passage is legacy and what we're going to discover is they had the opportunity to leave a legacy of faith, they had an opportunity to leave a legacy of belief, they had an opportunity to leave a legacy of the supernatural, but rather than that they chose a legacy of the convenient and the temporal and 2,000 years later, oh what a valuable lesson for us about the power of a legacy.

Verse 47 of John 11 says,

47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man does many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient [or good] for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this

spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. 53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. 54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. 55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

Think about the opportunity here. There is a legacy that is left and every single one of us will leave a legacy, the question particularly when it comes to our spiritual legacy, will it be one of faith and fruit or will it be one of doubt and death? So when we talk about one's legacy, I want to address what I consider key questions about this passage. The first one is this: who is influencing your legacy? Who is influencing it because the first thing we've got to deal with is this issue of plurality. Notice in this passage it says, "What about our nation? What about our place? What's going to happen to us?" You know, the group that's assembled in this passage is known as the Sanhedrin. It's a group of 72 individuals including the high priest, Caiaphas, and yet out of 72 of them – listen to this interesting fact – it only took 23 people to make a majority vote. In other words, it's not as if everybody was on board, it's not as if they got even a simple majority, it's, "We need the collective opinion of a select few in order to go forth."

You see, when we talk about our spiritual legacy, oftentimes it is those around us, it is those that are in our close circles and even our broader circles that have so much influence on us and yet I'm reminded of the Apostle Paul in his last will and testament, the book of 2 Timothy 4, the very last chapter, he makes this very pointed statement, he says, "I have run my race." You see, we talk about our spiritual legacy, that which we leave to our children, our grandchildren, that which we leave to the proverbial next generation, there are those around us that would influence us for good, bad and indifferent, but the Apostle Paul modeled for us that he had his race and the Lord has for you your race.

But it's also the issue of politics. Now I put that in quotations and here's why: don't think Democrat, Republican, Libertarian Party, this or that, but politics in the sense of those who were the power brokers, those who had the capacity with a very simple decision to change things not only temporally but long lasting. In this passage of Scripture, there is this principle character by the name of Caiaphas. He is the high priest. Notice what happens in the story: when he speaks, things change, things happen. So when we talk about our spiritual legacy, there are those that are around us that can influence both for the positive and negative about what the Lord has called us to but there's also those in key

positions in our life both in inner circles and greater circles, that their word, their opinion, their perspective, can change everything.

But then there's also our personal preference. It gets down to what do we want. Think about this passage: they wanted to make sure that Rome didn't take over, they wanted to make sure that the names that were on the plaque would have the same last name for generation after generation after generation and this rogue rabbi out of Nazareth, Jesus Christ, was threatening all of that. You see, what was at stake here in John 11 was legacy. That which had been built in the flesh was now being challenged by Jesus. You and I, every single one of us, need to ask ourselves this very important question: what will our spiritual legacy be? And those that are around us and those who we look to and those that we listen to, they do influence how we respond to the Gospel in our life.

But the next question is this: what prevents a spiritual legacy? What will keep you from being all the Lord would ask you and desire you to be? Notice what verse 47 says, "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man does many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." I want to use a word today and the word is fear. The Bible makes it very clear in 2 Timothy 1, we've not been given the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind, but I am convinced that the overwhelming majority of believers who do not have a thriving spiritual legacy it's because they're fearful. Do you know what fear does? It paralyzes you. You're so afraid of what might be or could be or should be that you freeze.

Now what are the things that are exhibited in this passage? The first one is the fear of the possibilities. Notice what they said, "Well, if we side with this man, if we listen to what he's saying, if we go Jesus' way, Rome might come in and might take over." One of the statements that I love to share is man's fears are rarely half-realized. We oftentimes can dream up of so many things that could or might happen that just because it might, we won't go forth with what we know should be in our lives. One of my favorite Proverbs is Proverbs 26:13. It says that a poor man, it says that a sluggard will not go out in the morning because he says there might be a lion in the streets. In other words, I'm not going to go to work today because I might get killed on the way. I'm not going to go there because there might be something bad that happens to me. I'm not going to invest spiritually into others' lives because what if they reject me? What if they don't like it? What if they distance themselves from me? How many times have we not purposely walked where we need to spiritually because of what somebody might do, might say, or how they might respond?

But it's not just the possibilities, it's also the fear of the probability. Notice in this passage that Caiaphas speaks and when he speaks he gives what the Bible calls a prophecy, a statement in advance, a truth declared in advance. Now it says that he said that one should die for the nation and that he did not know the impact of what he was saying. Well, allow me to share with you Caiaphas' perspective in the flesh, "If we can silence this Jesus, if we can eliminate him and his followers, we'll never have to worry about Rome again and the Jewish nation will be saved." But what does the Scripture say? He

knew not that it would be Jesus' death and eventual resurrection that would not just provide the salvation for the Jews but the salvation for all people, all nations, all kindreds and all tongues. You see, Caiaphas declared, "It's going to happen. Somebody's going to die and lives are going to be changed."

That reminds me again of the Apostle Paul. In the book of Philippians 3, he is in prison, he's been there for three years because he's been preaching, he's been proclaiming. He's there waiting for his eventual trial and his execution and there writing to the church at Philippi in chapter three, he makes this very unique statement, he says that, "I," the Apostle Paul, he says, "I was circumcised the eighth day." I mean, even before he could speak a word, he was a follower of the law of Moses. His parents made sure it was that way. He said, "I was circumcised the eighth day, the stock of Israel. I was a part of the people that God called out, the tribe of Benjamin, the beloved." He says, "I was a Pharisee. I was a Hebrew of Hebrews, zealous for the law of righteousness." What a resume, right? Then the every next verse he says, "I count this all for loss but for Jesus." Do you know what the Apostle Paul was saying? Listen, this is the probability that when we intentionally leave a spiritual legacy, when we say it is more important that people hear the word of God and the truth of Jesus in their life, it is probable that people are not going to necessarily well receive it. It is probable that that which you were born into and that which you have been blessed by in the flesh may not be to the same level that it was. Why? Because the Apostle Paul went from being a lawyer of wealth to a tent maker on the outskirts of society. It is probable that when we begin to leave a spiritual legacy it will change everything in our lives. You see, a spiritual legacy is not for the fainthearted.

It's also the fear of personalities: Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, these individuals who had the ability to do so much with just a word. How often do we not invest spiritually into others, our home, our children, our communities, even those that we work with, because we're fearful of what might happen, we're fearful of what we know is going to happen, or we're fearful of those in important positions who are not going to be so pleased with us?

So when it comes to what we're leaving behind spiritually, there are a lot of people who are influencing us, there are a lot of things that can keep us from becoming who the Lord desires us to be, but I want to address the possibilities: what happens, what can happen, what will happen in our lives when we purposefully make the things of God primary in our life and leave a spiritual legacy? I want you to notice verse 52. This is the prophecy of Caiaphas about Jesus, not knowing the eternal impact of his words, "And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." And what he is saying about the person of Jesus and what we know as believers and in followers of Jesus, this fulfillment that he should gather in all the nations, let me share with you the possibilities: the possibility is penetration. In other words, the light going out into the darkness and things changing in an environment being held captive not to the things of darkness but to the person of Jesus Christ, the one of light. In other words, the possibility of a spiritual legacy is seen in that which is headed the wrong direction, headed the right direction, that which is headed the wrong way now the right way, those lives that headed for destruction now headed toward life.

Penetration but also this possibility and that is of people. Today we celebrate one who has served faithfully in this place for 30 years, longer than some of you have even been breathing on planet earth, and yet I want to make something very clear: that his legacy and what our legacy needs to be, need not be about brick and mortar, it need not be about programs and this and that, but it needs to be about people and lives that have been changed because of Jesus Christ. Over the last 30 years, Mike King has served faithfully here over building projects, expansions, the sale thereof, program after program after program, but let me share with what his true legacy is and it needs to be a challenge to us. It's not the legacy of the building you're sitting in or the property that you pulled up on, it's the legacy of lives that have been changed and altered because of Jesus Christ. It's a legacy of addicts who have been set free. It's a legacy of marriages that were on the friz that have now been redeemed. It's a legacy of people who were dying in their sin that now believe that Jesus is the only answer.

You see, our spiritual legacy isn't about buildings and it's not about places. You see, eventually these things falls apart and rust and go by the wayside. It's about people. It's what's possible and we have the opportunity to penetrate this world by lives and people being changed and listen to this last challenge: perpetually. In other words, it doesn't end in a period, it actually ends in a dash because this same Apostle Paul in this same book of the Bible, 2 Timothy, made this statement to young Timothy, he said, "Take what I've given you." He said, "I want you to give it to faithful men who will turn around and give it to other faithful men." In other words, a spiritual legacy that is focused on the things of Jesus Christ doesn't end in 30 years. Listen, it doesn't necessarily end in 60 years. But it continues from this generation to that and every single one of us, every single one of us is the byproduct of somebody else's spiritual legacy. You heard about Jesus from someone who told you, who heard about Jesus, who heard about Jesus, who heard about Jesus from somebody else.

Do you know what's interesting about this passage? It's those that had the power, those that had the authority, those that when they spoke things changed, their legacy is one of death and destruction and those that were scattered, those that were in the Upper Room just a few days after this, those that the world looked at and said what difference can they make, a few years later it said they're turning the world upside down.

So how is it that that impact on people's lives can be perpetual in our lives? We need to do nothing else than look to one who's in the room with us today. Thirty years of ministry. I'm going to speak on his behalf but he would testify the same and so would his wife. She gave a good old amen in the first service so get ready. Here we go. There were times, Mike, over the last 30 years that you went to bed at night and you wanted to quit, didn't you? You wanted to quit. You wanted to give up and you questioned, "Is it really worth it? Is what I'm pouring into people, is it even making a difference?" You thought that, didn't you? "Why do I stay these long hours? Why do I put up with these meetings? Why do I invest my time? Is it making a difference?" Mike, look around, look around, because I dare say that a large portion of this service in particular wasn't even here 30 years ago when you began and Mike King's legacy here isn't the expansion of this building, it's not the plaques that are on the wall, it's the fact that you're here and the Lord

Jesus through his word is changing and impacting your life and we have the opportunity to do the same. May we take advantage of leaving a spiritual legacy in our homes and among our coworkers and among those that we have a sphere of influence in. Why? Because it's very clear that the things of this world will quickly fade and pass away but the word of God lasts forever.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're here today and you realize that you're the byproduct of a pretty dark spiritual legacy. I've got some news for you, some great news: you can be the first. I know the name of the first person in our family who came to know Jesus in recent years. Somebody has got to be that one who doesn't fear the possibility or the probability or the personalities. Maybe today you're the one that says, "Do you know what? It's time to begin the right spiritual legacy in our home." I want to encourage you to make that decision today, to claim Jesus as your Savior. Or maybe today the legacy is this local church and you say, "You know, this is where I want to grow spiritually. This is where I want my kids to grow, my grandkids to grow. This is where we need to plug in and be planted." You see, today our opportunity to respond isn't just about this time, it's not just about this day, it's about the days that will come hereafter and realizing that what we do this day and what we do tomorrow will have a lasting legacy and impact for years and decades and possibly even centuries to come.

Lord, as we come to this time of response and opportunity to have our lives be an imitation of yours, an opportunity to see darkness be penetrated by the light, an opportunity to see the flourishing and the fruit of your Holy Spirit in our lives, Lord, I pray that we not take it for granted and I pray that whatever it is you've pressed upon our heart whether it be a conversation or a decision that needs to be made this day or that which needs to happen quickly thereafter, Lord, may we just simply be and may we simply do what you've called us to be and do. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us. Any decision, I'll be here at the front.

"Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

My chains are gone
I've been set free

My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace."

As we continue our opportunity to respond, if you're a guest or visitor with us today, an opportunity for that decision, I'll be at PublicUs. It's not over, in fact in just a moment I'm still going to be here at the front, but all of us now have the opportunity to respond by trusting the Lord by giving of that which is very temporal and tangible, the giving of our financial resources as we give of our tithes and our offerings. We all have the opportunity to respond and in just a moment after our prayer when we're seated, if you're here to make another decision, I will still be here at the front. I'm going to ask my friend, Adam Massey, to come and pray for us and then we'll have the privilege of giving.

Adam Massey: Join me in prayer.

Father God, we come before you this morning just grateful and thankful just to be able to gather in your house. Lord God, as Brother Jeff has laid out the challenge for us, as we leave this place, Lord God, as we go into the work place, into the schools, into our homes, Lord God, that we would take a look in the mirror, Father God, and to know that the legacy that we're leaving with each individual that we're in contact with, is one of victory, is one of joy that you have given us. And I pray that each one of us, Lord God, that's the feeling that we would leave with all the individuals we come in contact with. We come before you today in celebration of the legacy that Brother Mike has left in each one of us here, Lord God, and the legacy that he will continue to leave of one of serving you. Just be with us today and just bless these tithes and offerings that we would further your kingdom. In your Son's name I pray. Amen.

"The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, Who called me here below
Will be forever mine."

As you're well aware, today is a day of celebration in the life and the ministry of Mike and Kathy King and at this time I'm going to ask them to join me on the platform, as well as Jay Walters who is the chairman of our deacon body, and he comes not just on behalf

of our deacons but on behalf of our personnel team and our finance team and all of those who we are privileged to serve with on a regular basis here at First Baptist. It may seem a little anticlimactic for the King family because we have multiple services and we're about to redo what we've already done but we do want you to be aware of what you have provided and what you have given as a very tangible thanks to the King family.

Now I want to remind you tonight you have the opportunity to come and to enjoy fellowship and food and just to enjoy from 5 to 7 in the 316 Center. There is going to be a reception honoring Mike and Kathy so, please, we want to encourage you to come. It's going to be a come and go event and so whatever time is best between 5 and 7, please, we want you to be a part of it.

But two things that we want to share with Mike. The first is a very tangible, on your mantle kind of gift. For those of you that don't know Mike very well, and I've gotten to know him over 18 months, Mike's very eclectic. Very eclectic and so we stressed – yes, yes. I've got you covered, brother. Y'all don't know this, we show up every Sunday and we compare socks and we wore...this was not on purpose. The very first time we met, we had the same shirt on and now it's fitting we have the same suit on, without any type of communication about it at all. Oh, and this is even his bow tie. Now, you're wondering, "How did he pull that off?" My son needed one for school three weeks ago. I asked him, "Hey, man, I don't own a bow tie. Can I borrow one?" I conveniently did not return it.

Now that being said, but this is something for him and Kathy to put on their shelf at home. It says, "In grateful recognition of 30 years of faithful service to our Lord in First Baptist, Opelika. Dr. Michael E. King. November 12, 2017." So Mike, we say thank you so much.

Over the course of time, I'm sure many of us will have the privilege of being in their home and actually seeing on display that which was given today but the next gift is something that involves none of y'all and only you two. That's right, Mike and Kathy love to travel. They love to take trips. In fact, you've got one planned. You're leaving Tuesday morning, is that correct? Monday morning, Never mind! Monday morning. Why get used to it? Let's just take off. But Monday they're leaving and so we as a church body on behalf of our deacons, our personnel team and our finance team, we want to provide for you another tangible gift in the form of an envelope and what Mr. Jay is handing to you is enclosed in this envelope is the financial ability to take the trip of a lifetime, you two. We want you to go and enjoy yourselves, within reason, go and enjoy yourselves and have a wonderful time and thank you, thank you, thank you for 30 years, my brother. Thank you.

You might want to be seated. We're not done yet. I'm going to go on record and Mike will testify that I did offer Mike the opportunity to preach today. Did I not?

Mike: Yes, you did.

And I said, "If you want it, brother, it's all yours," and he said, "No, just give me a few minutes at the end." So you know what happens with preachers, they take a few minutes, y'all get comfortable.

Mike: And that's why I wrote it down. Thank you, Jeff. God bless you. I appreciate you so much and thank you for making today happen for whatever I thought I was prepared for, I was not emotionally. I mentioned in the early service this morning that Jim Allen, if you don't know Jim, you should, and those of you who know Jim know that Jim can get a little emotional sometimes and we're kind of cut out of the same cloth so I told him this morning I'd probably do him proud this morning. But let me just say that today closes obviously a chapter in my life but begins a new one and how in the world can I find the words to express my thanks and appreciation to you, my church family, my family of faith here at First Baptist, Opelika?

It was 30 years ago that I stepped on this stage for the very very first time and when asked to share what my philosophy of ministry looked like, I used four words: I said reach, teach, win and develop and that was kind of the heart of what I was doing. I like to think that over these 30 years through some maturity and growing, those words would be a little bit different and I might describe the heart of my ministry now as shepherd, teach, lead and disciple, but I can assure you that the passion that that 35 year old had back then is still the same as it is today. It is today what it was back then. It's an understatement that that young man back in that day with an almost mullet hairdo, if you can imagine that, who thought he knew absolutely everything there was to know about ministry and had decided that he would take this place by storm, was gravely mistaken. But I have matured over the years and I'm grateful for that and I know that you are too. I certainly hope you are.

Our journey has been a very unique journey. I have survived four pastors...excuse me, I have had the privilege of serving with four pastors. I have had the privilege of working with four pastors and having served with 48 different staff members, these co-laborers whom I love dearly. I must, I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to two staff members who are now with the Lord, they're in heaven, and that would be John Leland who was our minister of music when I arrived here at First Baptist, and who was able to capture truly what the heart of ministry through music really looked like and I loved him dearly and we shared years together in serving; and Sherry Housley who was my ministry assistant when I came who was absolutely convinced that I didn't know what I was doing and yet she was able to make me look like I did, and who fondly made the statement that I could take something very simple and complicate it quicker than anyone that she had ever met. Two staff members today: Susan DeLoach and Philip Preston remain on our staff who were here then. They're the lone holdouts. And I must acknowledge my ministry assistant now, Diane Vickers, with whom I've worked for 17 years that is able to think my thoughts even before I think them and that's pretty scary.

I've had the privilege to serve with some true church men over the years, godly men who were leaders then and who have led us faithfully over these years. I've watched younger adults begin to step into those roles, who when it was their turn to step up to the plate,

they stepped up to the plate and have served so wonderfully. Thirty years have enabled me also to watch young men who were teenagers when I came who now God has raised up to be the spiritual leaders of our church. And I'm thinking, Jay, of you and men like you who are doing that. What a blessing.

I could reminisce for hours and hours but I don't want to do that and you don't want to sit here that long and listen to me, so let me just say from the depths of my heart: thank you. Thank you for being patient with me. Thank you for allowing me to share life with you. It has truly been about relationships, Jeff. You're exactly correct. Buildings, property goes away, relationships don't and I thank you for allowing me to build those relationships with you. Thank you for loving my children and for celebrating with us their weddings and the arrival of our precious grandchildren. Thank you for the pastors and staff who let me pursue my strengths in ministries and forgave my mistakes. Thank you to my family, especially my children, who were 8 and 5 when we arrived here and I appreciate so much and love them for not becoming bitter when our plans had to change because of ministry plans that had to supersede what they would have loved for me to have done with them. I love them for that. Most of all I thank you for my sweet wife, Kathy, who is my best friend, has been my partner in ministry not just these 30 years but throughout my entire ministry, who gave of herself sacrificially to nurture our children and to never grumble when I missed dinner because of a meeting that went longer than it was supposed to. But most of all, I want you to hear my heart: I thank my heavenly Father who, first of all, gave me salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and who called me beyond a shadow of a doubt 50 years ago, that he called me into ministry. I will never forget that and can never celebrate that enough.

Being the good Auburn fan that I am and sorry, Chris Wood, for celebrating a great victory over Georgia yesterday. Being the good Auburn fan that I am, I really wanted to close my thoughts with those words that Jim Fife, the long time voice of the Tigers for years used as he closed every one of the broadcasts when he said, "My time is up. I thank you for yours." But I can't do that, for you see, today is not about me, it's not even about us, but it is about the majesty and the glory of the Lord who loves us unconditionally. It is about his faithfulness, his faithfulness to us and we celebrate that today. And so this is what I want to leave you from the words of Paul who said, "For this reason, I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your innermost being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power to gather with all the Lord's people to grasp how wide, how long, how high and deep is the love of Christ and to know his love, this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. And now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and Jesus Christ through generations forever and ever and ever." God bless you. I love you with all my heart. Amen and amen.

Jeff: I'm going to ask Mike and Kathy to make their way to the front. We do want to encourage you tonight from 5 to 7, it's a come and go event, food will be provided. Just

an opportunity for you to come and to share with them. Now understand, we may have sung songs from his funeral but today is not his death. He's still going to be around even next year as we roll in, in a capacity or so, but we want you even if you're not able to come tonight, we want you to come by in just a moment and just say a quick word to them.

You know, Mike, it just wouldn't be our style if we didn't end on a fun note. Mike and I like to have a good time together. We're both kind of that way. You know, they say a picture is worth a thousand words and in this service in particular, we're about to show something that may be scary to some of you because you've never seen it before and so with the help of my good friend, Todd, show them what he looked like 30 years ago when he showed up. Ah, yeah. Look at that 35 year old young man. And we move on. Wow, there's hair. But we do thank you, Mike, for 30 years. We're going to ask him and Kathy to be here at the front. I'll be at the guest reception. I encourage you to be there tonight, 5 to 7, 316 Center.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we depart from this place, Lord, how comforting it is to know that even though we will physically walk out of here, that your Spirit never leaves us, your word never fades away, and salvation never goes void. Thank you for the testimony of these 30 years. Lord, thank you for the faithfulness of Mike and Kathy to their family, to this church, more importantly to you. Lord, thank you for the challenge. Thank you for the encouragement. May we follow suit and may we be found faithful as well. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen. God bless.