



May 20, 2007

The Mentor

The pursuit of knowledge is one of the great endeavors of all mankind. It is something that has been pursued over the ages and it is something that is considered essential for success. It is so important that laws have been made concerning the need to gain knowledge. Children are required to go to school for 13 years. Why? To gain knowledge. Teachers must continue their education for at least another five years, why, so they can gain the knowledge in how to teach and pass knowledge on to others. What makes a teacher a great teacher? It's not a bubbly personality, it's not, multiple degrees or certificates, it's not the size of the budget. What makes a great teacher is the ability to motivate a student and the ability to show the student that you really care and love them, which is only done with the personal touch. This is done by modeling or mentoring the student, which is definitely a biblical strategy. Now you might say, "Matt how is it a biblical strategy?" Well, I'm glad you asked.

Consider the prophet Elijah, a prophet above all prophets, the only prophet taken directly into heaven. We first meet Elijah in 1 Kings Chapter 17. The children of Israel had gone through a split the ten tribes of the north had split off from the two tribes of the south, Benjamin and Judah. The ten tribes retained the name Israel the tribes of the south called themselves Judah. Israel, the northern kingdom the ten tribes is ruled by King Ahab who is married to Jezebel and who, according to the writer of 1 Kings, "did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him." 1 Kings tell us that he considered it trivial to worship false gods. Elijah was called to confront King Ahab and his wife Jezebel as well as the false prophets and priests. It began with the announcement that the Lord is going to send a terrible drought on the land; it was a divine judgment on a

nation that had turned to idolatry. It was also a demonstration that even though Bale was the God of fertility and lord of the rain clouds he was powerless to give rain in the face of the almighty God. God brought that drought on the land and the result; a death sentence was put on Elijah's head as well as all the others who served God. Obadiah hid 100 of the Lord's servants in caves. But God cared for Elijah first in the ravine where ravens brought him bread and meat twice a day, which again is very symbolic. To eat meat daily was not standard fare for common people. On the other hand, royalty had meat on their table on a daily basis.

Elijah is depicted as eating at God's table from there he stayed with the widow of Zeraphath where we read, "so he went to Zeraphath when he came to the town gate a widow was gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, 'would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?' as she was going to get it he called, 'and bring me please a piece of bread.' 'As surely as the Lord you God lives', she replied, 'I don't have any bread only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I'm gathering a few sticks to take home and make my meal for myself and my son so that we may eat it and die.' Elijah said to her, 'don't be afraid go home and do as you have said but first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me and then make something for yourself and your son.'"

When Elijah speaks his words are the command of the Lord and the widow is asked to give all she has to sustain God's servant. She gave it all to fulfill what God wanted. She was gathering sticks to just build a fire so she could bake her last loaf of bread and Elijah has asked for it. The result, well, her flour and oil never ran out. Elijah even raised her son from the dead and after over two years of God providing all the flour and all the oil Elijah sent back to again confront Ahab, Jezebel, the false prophets and false priests, which Elijah did in style on Mount Carmel.

You know the story; there was a challenge to see who worshipped the true God. The sacrifices were put on altars prophets of Bale prayed, screamed cut themselves before their altar and their sacrifice but Bale sent no fire. Elijah stood on the sideline and taunted them, "Oh he must be sleeping, oh maybe he's somewhere else, oh maybe he's a little tired, oh maybe Bale's had a little too much wine." But after a half day of this nonsense Elijah finally says enough, it's his turn. He goes to his offering and he has water

dumped on it three times so much that it fills the moat that's been dug around the altar. Then he prays and his sacrifice his altar and all the water is consumed with fire from heaven. You would think that there would be a great turning to the true God but no a death sentence is again put on Elijah. Elijah at that point and time has had enough he tells God, "take my life I am no better than my ancestors." He sees himself as a failure just as his ancestors were not able to turn the people Elijah is not able to turn the people but God doesn't see him as a failure. In fact at that time He tells Elijah that he needs to go and anoint Elisha and train him so that he can take over Elijah's job when the Lord calls him home. God asks Elijah to mentor Elisha and what a job he did and what a compliment that was to Elijah that God would want him to show Elisha to do what he was doing. It was Elisha then, he who was mentored by Elijah who also raised a young boy from the dead, fed 100 men with 20 dinner rolls, healed Naman of his leprosy and on and on. Is mentoring a successful plan? You bet it is.

In fact, isn't that what Jesus did? He mentored twelve men for three years. Yes He taught them, that's what the parables were all about but He showed them modeled for them love, forgiveness, servant hood and compassion. In our gospel this morning He brings it all together. In Luke 24:44 He says, "This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms." He begins by saying this is what I've taught you. But obviously they don't quite understand so we hear Him taking the next step. "Then He opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures." He opens their minds so that they can see exactly what He is talking about and then like a good teacher he summarizes what he just said. He says, "This is what is written the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem." He summarizes, this is what was written and this is what needs to be done. Finally He gives the command, "you are witnesses of these things." He says I've been mentoring you; you have been with me all along I've shown you this. "I'm going to send you what my Father has promised but stay in the city until you're clothed with power on high." You've seen me, you've seen what I have done, you've seen what I want you to do I'm going to send you the Holy Spirit and when He comes he'll give you the power to do as I've shown you.

In fact, Matthew records Christ's final words as, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Notice there's two things there; teaching them and making disciples. How do you make a disciple? You teach them and you show them how to do it. Last week we saw part of the result, Paul mentored Timothy. Timothy had been taught and mentored by his mother and grandmother but then Paul mentored him and sent him to Ephesus to continue the process to preach, teach and show the people of Ephesus the message of repentance and forgiveness to assure them of Christ's ascension in to heaven, which we celebrate today, and His eminent return which we will celebrate the day He comes back.

Last week we also saw that as parents and grandparents we have a job. We have a job to mentor our children and grandchildren but what is the role of the church as a mentor? Well, you might say that's what Sunday school, youth group and our upcoming daycare and preschool is all about. But is also why we have a mission offering every Christmas a mission offering that goes to the church for scholarship fund to help those who want to go into ministry. But you know, just cutting a check for someone to go to ministry isn't going to do the trick.

That's why this summer we're stepping out the Consistory; your Elders have decided that we're going to have an intern this summer. A young man named Adam Day, he's going to intern with us or mentor with us this summer, many of you know Adam he's the grandson of Merle and Ella Warner. He's graduating from Biola University this month and will go to the seminary next year. I'm very excited about us working with him. Us? Don't you mean you Pastor Matt? Nope, I mean us. I certainly will do as much as I can but listen carefully, as I look out at our Zion family I see a family that I feel has mentored me for 11 years and I cant think of a better family or a better place to be mentored. Some might ask, "What are we going to get out of it?" Nothing at all except the satisfaction and knowledge that we've done what God wants us to do. We've enhanced His kingdom and we have helped someone just as Paul helped Timothy and I look forward to down the road seeing what Adam Day will do in the kingdom of God.

In our Savior's name, Amen.