

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, ²so that you and your children and your children’s children, may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. ³**Hear** therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. **Hear**, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. ⁵**You shall love** the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

¹⁰When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, ¹¹houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, ¹²take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

1 John 3:1-7

3:1 See **what love** the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

Proclamation of the Word

"We are dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants"

Bernard of Chartres is the first to have said this in the 12th Century, we believe. Then in 1676 Sir Isaac Newton wrote in a letter:

"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

If we see and understand better, it is because we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Bernard was the headmaster of the Chartres Cathedral School. Cathedral schools were the predecessors of modern universities. We can thank Sir Isaac Newton for the laws of physics and

gravity. But Newton knew that he developed the laws because of those who had made discoveries before him. Every generation stands on the shoulders of earlier generations. Because of these giants, we are like dwarves who can see farther.

In the south transept of Chartres Cathedral, there is a rose window with Christ as its' center image. Underneath the rose window are five lancets, vertical windows. In each window are the evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John literally sitting on the shoulders of larger men, the prophets. Bernard probably observed that window knowing that the 4 evangelists that tell us of Jesus Christ, is only possible because of the great prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, and Daniel who told of the coming messiah, The window links the old testament to the new testament. And right in the middle of the prophets and evangelists is Mary holding an infant Christ.

In the life of faith, we receive our faith as an inheritance and a gift. Faith is a gift of the Spirit, but also something we inherit from the everyday saints who share tell us about the good news of Jesus Christ. All of us are here today, because they came before us. We stand on the shoulders of giants.

As you know, we are bridging generations here at Fort Hill Church. In the months ahead we hope to enhance our buildings and add our generation's contribution to our existing space. We can be here today worshiping and growing in faith, because faithful men and women before us came to Clemson to work, study, serve, and live. And they became a part of this covenant community of faith. Against much hardship, they faced the challenges of providing a space for God's people to gather. Some of you know the history. In 1931 the first brick church was dedicated only to burn to the ground very soon after. In the midst of the Great Depression Fort Hill church rebuilt the granite building- twice. Now that takes more than hard work and money, in the Depression that took great faith and God's providence. Every 30 years and about every generation, Fort Hill church has been added on to. 1961 they built the Education Building which is driving our renovation. And in 1990 you all dedicated this building house of stone and light, this sanctuary. Some said it couldn't be done, but each generation has made a contribution with God's help. We can gather because of those including some of you have made that possible with God's help. We are dwarves sitting on the shoulders of giants. We can see with the eyes of faith because of their role in our lives.

I was in a gathering Tuesday where we were discussing this and one woman gave witness. She said, "We are here today because of the Vi Fords, the Harvey Hobsons, the Monica and Davis McGregors, the Buddy Sparks, and she continued to name so many faithful members of Fort Hill. She said, "It's our time, to take the leap of faith and do our part!" Grateful for those dear every day saints who kept the heat on, ran the preschool, taught in Sunday School, served our neighbors, loved one another, sang in the choir, and served as Elders. We are here because they were here. We sit on the shoulders of giants.

In every generation of the church, there comes a moment when we get to work together and make an impact on our church. We will be able to welcome those who cannot use stairs. We will impact children and youth who will gather to play and learn the stories of our faith. I hate to confess that our kids favorite thing to do after church when they were little was to ride the elevator for kicks. So the elevator will be a joy for all ages! We will provide a beautiful, accessible resting place in our garden for those dear saints who rest from their labors.

Perhaps you did not grow up here, but someone in some church family cared for you, prayed for you, and you are here because of them. Ms. Mary Hanks, an older woman in my church, told me one time that every time a child was baptized, she added their name to her prayer list. "I pray for all the children of this church." She said, "I have prayed for you Laura that you would know God's love and respond in faith. And you did!"

I was one answer to Mary's prayers. You are the answer to the prayers of Betty, Pansy, Mary Lang, Jim, Linda, Lou, Alan and so many more. You are the answer to the prayers of all those who built this house of worship. You are the answer to the prayers of Lucy and Gordon Anderson whose representative just sent us a check for third of their family trust totaling \$133,000, because they remembered Fort Hill in their will. Talk about God's timing. You are the answers to their prayers. Heaven rejoices because you are here. And the everyday saints are cheering us on in our race to the finish line. For they have fought the good fight, finished their race, and received their crown.

In our reading from the book of Deuteronomy we are reminded that we are to tell the next generation about God and call them to be obedient in faith. We are to teach them to love the Lord with heart, mind, and strength. We are all children of the Father, no matter the age. And someone either by age or maturity of soul had to share that good news with us. We drink from wells we did not dig, and eat and drink from vineyards we did not plant.

All of us have climbed trees we did not plant, studied in schools we did not build, and worshiped together in churches someone built before us. We have even walked over bridges we did not build. And to grow in maturity is to be able to plant a tree we will never get to climb, fashion a school we will never attend, and build a bridge that we may never walk across.

There is deep, lasting satisfaction in giving and generosity mostly because we are images of the Father who is so generous. And we are becoming more like God when we are generous, loving, and gracious. See what love the Father has given us that we are called children, and so we are. Children receive an inheritance that will last for all time, the gift of faith. As the writer of 1st John wrote, "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is."

In one church there was a sanctuary filled with stain glass windows depicting the saints of the church over time. During preschool chapel one day the children were meeting with the pastor in that

sanctuary. He was talking about saints being people who respond to God's love and live as faithful disciples. He showed them the windows and told him the stories of some of the saints depicted in the colored glass.

When the class returned the teacher was asking them what it was they discussed in chapel. She asked "What is a saint?"

The little boy raised his hand and said, "They are the ones the light shines through."

May it be said of our generation, a generation for whom the window of our church is a symbol, "Oh, those Christians over at Fort Hill Church. They are the ones the light shines through."

Let's continue to be the church where the lights are always on, to share the light of Christ in the center
of this college town.

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