

*Transitions – Luke 24:44-53*

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So, we're nearing the end of the school year. And about this time every year, there are a series of lasts for school kids. At the high school level, which is where I'm most tuned in these days, there are end-of-the-year banquets, last track meets, and last concerts.

Such was the case this past Tuesday at Farragut High, where the vocal music department held their spring concert, the last of the year. And, reflective of the great positive momentum in that program right now, there was a lot of emotion in that concert. As the last pieces were performed and the singers were recognized for their achievements over the last year, the tears flowed—from the eyes of many of the singers but also the eyes of the directors.

In this student-teacher relationship, it's obvious that there's great love and respect there. The bond is strong between the adults who direct the students and the students who are mentored and nurtured by the directors.

At the end of the year, at the final concert, there was an air of transition. The seniors who are graduating would never take that stage again, the directors would never direct them again. There was a palpable sense that the singers (the senior students) were being passed on to the next choral instructor—whatever and whenever that would be.

The baton of instruction and care is always passed on, whether it's in elementary school, high school, college, or church. Not one person can do it all, even when you think you'd want that one person being a mentor for all time.

This is true of many avenues of life—nobody does it all. Rarely does one who starts a job of teaching or mentoring finish the job.

Why is it that, after Jesus' resurrection from the grave, he spent time with his disciples again? Why did he not just immediately

ascend into heaven? It would have saved him the awkwardness of having to leave the disciples a second time.

There's multiple reasons for that, of course. One of them, evidently, is his need for them to hear of an important teaching one more time. Here at the end of Luke 24, Jesus reminds them that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins had to be proclaimed. (Luke 24:45–47).

It was his last lecture, if you will, the last time they would hear it from his own lips before he passed on the job to somebody else. He died, he rose, and folks like them and like us should change our ways for the better in response to this amazing act of Godly power.

That's what it all boiled down to. Here it one more time, he said. "This is what the Messiah has done for you and for the world. Don't forget it. And share it."

Any good teacher or professor has this inherent need to repeat the most important lesson he or she wants his or her students to not forget. "Take this one thing with you as I pass you along into the next phase of your life."

And that's what Jesus did. After delivering the lesson one more time, he led them out as far as Bethany, lifted his hands, blessed them, and was carried up into heaven.

He would continue to guide them and teach them, but not in ways that the disciples probably hoped for or counted on. In an instant, he was gone. Jesus had earlier promised them that the Holy Spirit would be sent as their advocate, their helper. But at the moment, the disciples probably didn't get how the work of Jesus would continue without his physical presence.

Christ knew, however, that the baton had to be passed. The word would go from his physical being to the Spirit, and the Spirit would come to person after person, prophet after prophet, leader after leader, spreading the Word over hundreds and thousands of years to come.

In the great tradition of Moses, who labored as the God's chief messenger for years and years but who was forbidden from finally

entering the promised land with the Israelites and who passed the torch to Joshua for the final leg of the journey, Jesus knew that it would take others carrying the Word in the absence of his physical presence to complete the job.

Rarely, does one person lead us from the start of our journey to its conclusion. And it is so true of our faith. The Sunday School teacher we have as a pre-schooler is different from the one we have in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, who's different from the youth leader we have in high school, who's different from the one who guides us as a college student. Our life journeys as adults take us from place to place, where we meet and become close to pastors or other Bible teachers for periods of time.

Our parents are right in there, too, with the best spiritual mentors we could want. Now let's face it: Not all Moms and Dads are great. Many have missed the mark when it comes to spiritual leaders or any other kind of leader for that matter. But for those who have gotten it, who've sacrificed and led their kids with wisdom and compassion, they rank really high on our list of trusted voices.

And on this Mothers' Day, let's celebrate them. Because as we transition to new phases of our lives, loving mothers have played critical roles in many of those phases. When we move out of their houses, we might not see our moms as much or have as much direct contact with their wisdom and guidance. They pass us along to others as well. But to varying degrees, they remain the ones who teach and capture our attention the most.

So, we salute them. And specifically, we widen our praise to include the women we often forget.

In her "Open Letter to Pastors" about Mother's Day, Amy Young advises pastors to, among other things, acknowledge the wide continuum of mothering:

To those who gave birth this year to their first child -- we celebrate with you.

To those who lost a child this year -- we mourn with you.

To those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear

the badge of food stains -- we appreciate you.

To those who experienced loss through miscarriage, failed adoptions or running away -- we mourn with you.

To those who walk the hard path of infertility, fraught with pokes, prods, tears and disappointment -- we walk with you. Forgive us when we say foolish things. We don't mean to make this harder than it is.

To those who are foster moms, mentor moms and spiritual moms -- we need you.

To those who have warm and close relationships with your children -  
- we celebrate with you.

To those who have disappointment, heartache and distance with your children -- we sit with you.

To those who lost their mothers this year -- we grieve with you.

To those who experienced abuse at the hands of your own mother -- we acknowledge your experience.

To those who lived through driving tests, medical tests and the overall testing of motherhood -- we are better for having you in our midst.

To those who are single and long to be married and mothering your own children -- we mourn that life has not turned out the way you longed for it to be.

To those who step-parent -- we walk with you on these complex paths.

To those who envisioned lavishing love on grandchildren, yet that dream is not to be -- we grieve with you.

To those who will have emptier nests in the upcoming year -- we grieve and rejoice with you.

To those who placed children up for adoption -- we commend you for your selflessness and remember how you hold that child in your heart.

And to those who are pregnant with new life, both expected and surprising -- we anticipate with you.

This Mother's Day, we walk with you. Mothering is not for the faint

of heart and we have real warriors in our midst. We remember you.

--Amy Young, "An open letter to pastors (A non-mom speaks about Mother's Day)," [messymiddle.com](http://messymiddle.com), May 9, 2014. Retrieved December 16, 2017.

When the day comes that we must depart from our moms who've mentored us and taught us, we are sad; but at the end of our life's journeys, we're able to look back and see how blessed we were to have been molded by them and so many different voices, so many different personalities, so many different styles.

The fullness of the word, Jesus seems to say with his ascension into heaven, only becomes apparent when it is shared through the personalities and passions of a variety of God's children. Christ wanted all his children to hear the word and follow him through the colorful tapestry of messengers he would place before them.

We should be thankful that the baton that is God's Word is not controlled by one person. It is framed, articulated, and crafted by person after person before being passed on to the next. And the richness of God's people is what causes God's word to remain fresh, challenging, instructive, and full of hope.

There is always a great sadness when someone we love dies. We miss different qualities of different people. And if we're really attached, we miss their legacy of wisdom and mentoring. When that special someone dies, a void is left and that void will be filled. It will be filled by that new mentor, that new teacher, that new doctor, that new boss, that new friend. And though we mourn, we grow. And maybe we grow into that part. Maybe we more quickly become that mentor, teacher, or guide to somebody else. And maybe the world will be enhanced in ways it could not have been before.

Jesus transitioned into heaven. And yet, 2000 years after he did so, the Word is present—still strong. Through the leadership and investment of so many, including so many good moms, God's word is being proclaimed in word and deed. Thanks be to God for those

who've taken the baton and those they will pass it to in years to come.