

**THANK YOU TO OUR TEACHERS**  
**Teacher Appreciation Sunday – May 22, 2011 – Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 and 20**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

*Thank you to our teachers.* One of the great joys I have had in moving back into the Pittsburgh area has been bumping into my former teachers. When one is growing up you don't fully appreciate the true gift your teachers give. As I have gotten older, and I reflect over the many gifts I have been given in my life, I think more and more about my teachers, people who taught me about great literature, how to think, have given me a love of reading, an ability to have disciplined thought processes, and generally a love of education. Every week I write a sermon and each week I use the things my teachers have taught me.

*Thank you, to my teachers.* As I bumped into more and more of them when I moved back into the area 8 years ago an idea dawned in my brain. The idea was to make a point of tracking them down, writing them a letter, or saying to them in person "thank you" for all you have meant to me and all you have given me. I think ministers and teachers are a lot alike—we deal in intangible things. We spend great amounts of time trying to influence people's lives for the good, but often we do not know if we have "gotten through" if indeed for all our time and passion anything has changed, if indeed for all our teaching anyone's thoughts or hearts are transformed.

So I took time to say "thank you". I wrote some letters. I made a point of saying "thank you" to my teachers. And some of my former teachers were incredibly moved by just the simple act of saying "thanks". I have received some letters from them that I cherish and will read and re-read over the course of my life. Thank you is such a small thing; but often in today's world we are too busy or too self centered or too distracted to take the time to say thanks, "What you did for me changed my life; what you gave to me made me a better person; everything in my life I owe to you and to others who took an interest in me and taught me the most important things in life."

One of my teachers, Mrs. Jean Peck, passed away last year. Anyone who can teach me 9<sup>th</sup> grade English is a wonderful teacher; anyone who can teach me Latin is a SAINT! Mrs. Peck was tough but fair. I think she was actually harder on the students she thought had promise than on the ones she thought didn't. In a disciplined way she taught me a love of grammar; and sentence structure and a deep and abiding love for beautiful prose and poetry. What a gift she has given me! One of my favorite grammatical errors is to split an infinitive. She was a member of one of my congregations here in the Pittsburgh area; imagine how daunting it was to write and preach a sermon every week for one of your former English teachers! In one sermon on purpose I split every infinitive in one paragraph just for her. She sat in the third row and I was watching her wince with every splitting; at the end of the paragraph I told the congregation why I was splitting all those infinitives, they laughed, Mrs. Peck laughed, and I was most relieved I didn't get the sermon back with many, many red, magic marker circles on it! Mrs. Peck passed away last year. I was glad I was able to write her a letter telling her what she meant to me before she died and went to that place where n'er an infinitive is ever split. She lives on because of her faith; but she also lives on because of the investment she made in all of her students...and I am blessed to count myself as one of them...

In a way we are all teachers of the generation that is behind us...whether parents or actual teachers or pastors or elders...we all have been given something to share with another. Our scripture from the Old Testament from Deuteronomy remind us that "*these words*" --the words of scripture—"*shall be upon our heart*" (Deuteronomy 6: 6) Each of us have things and words and experiences, testimonies and stories and life lessons and faith lessons we are to share. Each of us is called by God to share what God

has first placed upon our heart. We are the expert at what God has done in our life and we are expected by the Almighty then to share what He has first placed there. We are all to take an interest in our young people, all to take an interest in the children in the church, all to take an interest in a new person who comes tentatively but in faith, seeking God in their life, seeking to serve Jesus in their heart. Our job is to share; our task is to teach. Our scripture then goes on to say: “...and you shall teach them diligently to your children.” (Deuteronomy 6: 7) Our task is to pass it along to the next generation. We must never forget what we have been taught; never fail to pass along the gift we have ourselves received; never be silent when we are to teach and to mentor and to share and in such a way that the next generation believes as well.

In a way we are all to say “thank you” to the generation that is before us...whether our parents or our actual teachers or the pastors or the mentors who so influenced our own lives. What they received they gave to us; for what we receive we are to say “thank you”. There is a power in gratitude; there is a HOLY POWER in the words and the actions in the act of expressing our thanks for someone who cared enough about us, to invest in us, to share with us what is on their heart, to pass along the gifts they themselves had received from their own teachers. From generation to generation...from teacher to teacher...from discipler to disciple...from one to another...from this Christian to the next...the beautiful gift is given...the torch is passed...that which has first been given to me is then in love passed on to thee. We are who we are today because great love has been poured into us by those teachers who preceded us.

*I urge you to take some time over the new few weeks to take out a piece of paper and write letters to the people who have taught you all the best lessons of life and faith. I urge you to participate in a HOLY POWER of Gratitude saying thank you to the people who have most influenced you for the good. Take time; make time...to say “thank you” to our teachers...I am so glad, so very glad I did not wait until it was too late to say thank you to Mrs. Peck. Do not wait; DO NOT WAIT UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE; express your heartfelt gratitude today.*

The Great Commission, the last words Jesus speaks to His disciples here on earth in Matthew 28, the very words we speak at every baptism here at The Church of the Covenant are these: “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 I have commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19-20)...discipling... baptizing... teaching... passing on the gift first given...passing on the Power of God and the knowledge of God and the truth of God and the commandments of God. When Jesus was at the end of His earthly teaching ministry these were His last words, the last words upon His heart that He wanted us to remember. Teachers, teach and pass along the gift you have received to the next generation that they too may teach!!!!!!

How often in the New Testament Jesus is addressed as “Rabbi”, meaning “teacher”. Yes, He is the Son of God and, yes, He is a prophet above all prophets, and, yes, He is Messiah, and, yes, He is Lord. But He is also TEACHER. Who writes the words of scripture on our heart? The great Rabbi! Who teaches us all spiritual knowledge through the Holy Spirit? The great Rabbi! Who teaches us to pray? Jesus does. Who teaches us what it means to be a disciple and to follow God with our life? Jesus does. Who is the fulfillment of all the law and prophets? Jesus is. Who IS the WORD of God? Jesus is. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you...to our teachers...and the greatest of these...is JESUS!!!!!! Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*