

¹ Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ² all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³ the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. ⁴ The LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.” ⁵ Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the LORD’s command. ⁶ He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷ Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. ⁸ The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

⁹ Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹ He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹² and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Today’s scripture takes us to the end of the October sermon series on “All Moses, All the Time.” He was certainly an interesting man:

- Born in the midst of a decree by Pharaoh that all Israelite male children were to be put to death, but he was saved by being hidden in a basket in the river, found by an Egyptian princess and raised in the home of the same Pharaoh who had ordered his death
- But his being reared in royalty was apparently all for nought, when he lost his temper one day upon seeing one of his fellow Israelites being physically beaten by an Egyptian overseer and he killed the Egyptian, and then had to lead the life of a fugitive, in the wilderness
- He was recruited by God to lead his people to freedom, at the place of a burning bush not consumed by the fire, and he tried to turn his back on God, but failed

- He was empowered by God to perform miracle upon miracle in Pharaoh's presence, culminating with the Passover – in which the angel of death struck the first born male in every home in Egypt, except those of the Israelites who had the blood of the lamb on their doorpost
- He led the Great Escape through the parting of the Red Sea, but then seemed to get bogged down in the wilderness
- He presided over a group of people who were contentious and about as easy to lead as herding kittens
- He received the Ten Commandment from God, but once again his anger took hold of him, and he broke the tablets upon which they were written
- He went on a journey for forty years, which by one estimate was a rate of approximately six miles per year
- He went on a journey toward a goal – the Promised Land – but as today's scripture tells us: he didn't arrive. He was only allowed to see what it looked like from the top of Mt. Pisgah.

If one is to look at the whole of Moses' life, it is not a difficult task to make the argument that he was a loser, a failure, an embarrassment in the annals of leadership throughout history.

And yet ...

And yet, God wrote a pretty nice obituary for Moses ... our scripture today tells us that there has never been "a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face ... unequaled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform"

Most of us have led far more modest lives than Moses, but most of us understand the notion of exchanging our childhood dreams at some point in time for something more practical, more realistic. I suspect that all of us here are able, at some

level, to understand what it means to not accomplish what once was our life goal ... to understand what it means to know failure along the way.

And yet

And yet, the nation of Israel wept at the passing of Moses, and he is today seen as the greatest leader of that nation.

The fact is, my sisters and brothers, that like Moses, NONE OF US gets to see the final consummation of our efforts. As St. Paul noted: some plant, others will nurture, and finally there are some that get to harvest.

The life and times of Moses teach each one of us that we are not to consider whether or not we are successful. Our task is to be faithful.

I recently read a biography of Ulysses S. Grant, the 18th President of the United States – something I had not done since my childhood days, when my parents subscribed to the “signature biography” series, giving me a biography to read each month.

Ulysses S. Grant’s biography read by me when I was a child put on the spin that was in vogue at that time. He was not a very popular president in the annals of history.

However, I recently read another biography of Grant, written just a few years ago, and it was enlightening. I found out that Grant was indeed extremely popular in his day – not just elected to two terms as President. His popularity continued for decades. There was debate about putting HIS face on Mt. Rushmore (1927); his face on the \$50 bill for over 100 years now. But then, later in the 20th century, some historians decided that his presidency was a blighted affair, and by the time I had read the biography as a child, Grant himself had a blighted reputation. But, this more recent biography said that there had been resurgence in Grant’s popularity again in the 1980’s (past my childhood reading) and I was surprised to find in reading about him now, just what a great reputation he had.

When we let other people's opinions about someone shape their value, then their real worth is subject to the whims of the particular moment. And the strength of that particular opinion in any given moment is not at all necessarily consistent with its factuality. A person's REAL WORTH comes from that given to her or him by God's opinion ... God, the One Who created each one in God's very own image.

We have a tendency to look at just the highlights ... or LOWlights of a person's life, including our own. See them illustrated on the back of your bulletin. But they are each a point on the whole labyrinth of each life – all fitting together to be part of the whole. [explain the overlay of the bulletin]

All the parts of life are woven together in a tapestry, which we are not able to see from where we stand.

And yet, there's even more.

It's not just our life that is at hand.

**My life is but a tapestry
Between my Lord and me.
I cannot choose the colors;
He worketh steadily
 Oftimes He weaveth sorrow,
 And I in foolish pride
 Forget He sees the upper
 And I, the underside.
Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.
 The dark threads are as needful
 In the Weaver's skilful hand
 As the threads of gold and silver
 In the pattern He has planned.**

This tapestry {demonstrating by unrolling a weaving} shows more than just the coming together of different events in each of our lives – all weaving a design and pattern that we cannot – from the view on this side alone – see its full beauty.

The tapestry also represents a weaving together of different lives:

- Lives that intersect with us now
- Lives that have intersected in the past
- And – also – OUR lives intersecting lives we see now – as well as weaving a design that we cannot see now.

Can you see [as I unroll the woven cloth to reveal threads of the warp hanging without the woof threads interwoven.] how these WARP THREADS hang loosely without form or design. They are incomplete without the interweaving of the WOOF THREADS.

Each one of our lives is a woof thread that must continue the tapestry begun before our lives – it continues during our lives. – and it continues after our lives

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a tapestry. As the writer of Hebrews wrote – **EACH PERSON'S LIFE DOES NOT REACH COMPLETION IN THEIR OWN LIFE.** The completion comes in the tapestry of the Kingdom of Heaven when all God's children throughout the history and future of humanity weave their warp and woof.

As I often pray with the children, asking for a blessing on the older folks whom the children are watching, so it is for each of us. We are the products of the ones

whose steps we have watched, and we are walking a way that will be the path for others.

Do NOT, I pray, be so concerned about how successful your life is, but about how faithful it is. God will write the other parts. The judgment of your peers is not the final judgment. Don't allow it to be the basis of your self-worth.

You are a beloved child of God, precious and beautiful to behold. Your life, like that of Moses, has an important role. Allow God's plan to be yours, and accept that you are going to fall down, just like the mighty Moses did. It's all right. Fall down, get up, fall down, get up. All the dots will line up in God's final cut of the film.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.