

Legacy – December 29th, 2024

Congregational Prayer – Thank God for 2024, take a moment and reflect back on what God has all done this last year. Here are some highlights on what all happened here at church, let's take a moment and thank God for all He has done!

- **Middle School Church** Started Up during the 11am service.
- **Summer Camp** – MS, HS, YA, FAM, Prime, Pillars – 1008 Campers
- **Food & Clothing Dr** – 2487 ppl Received Help; 1764 Hampers & 500 Bibles Given
- 77 **Baptisms** took place over 2024.
- **Church Renewal Weekend** – 85 delegates attended, 25 where lead pastors
- **Thank God for what HE did for you this year!**

Good morning, for those who don't know me, my name is Martin Gunter and I am the Care Pastor here at Southland Church. I would like to welcome anyone who is visiting this morning and for all those joining us online today, some of you are still recovering from all the Christmas feasting and gatherings... Before we get into the message today, I have two extra **announcements** for you: First one, *What is happening this Tuesday at 6pm?*

- New Year's Eve Prayer Summit **this Tuesday at 6:00pm**
- Empower Retreat – Jan 31st and Feb 1st

Secondly, the **Empower Retreat is coming up Jan 31st** and I would like to briefly share something that happened to me at the first Empower we did after COVID. For those of you who do not know, we have the Set Free Retreat where we can deal and confess our sins to one another and receive freedom from bondages, the **Empower is the follow up retreat where we look into what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit and his gifts and we get to explore them in how they can be used powerfully in our lives and the church!** See, back then I think I preached one message here with you, and did one Set Free with Pastor Chris Carr and at this Empower Pastor Stefan was there and he was showing both me and Chris the ropes so that we can one day just lead it. We divided the sessions between the 3 of us and led the weekend, giving feedback and learning together. Now, let me just say that I have been to MANY Set Free's and MANY Empowers, I was/am a bit of a retreat junkie because I have a lot of issues to work through... Now at this Retreat, I was excited to be there, nervous to go up and lead a session, but so excited, but so nervous, it would flip flop all day and all morning, but I have been to so many that I did not think that I needed to apply myself fully as either Chris or Stefan led their sessions, instead I was preoccupied with the sessions I had to lead. Well, let me tell you what happened on that Saturday morning. Chris started off with the Prophetic Session and it was awesome, and as he was leading, I was scanning my notes, my nerves started to get more intense and well up in my heart because I was the next one up. These nerves quickly turned into fear and all the sudden I wanted to not be there anymore. Which is weird for me, a retreat junkie... So Stefan called me and another guy over so we made a quick triad so that we can practice together what Chris is

teaching us... But I did not want to... I wanted to run... I did not want to be there all the sudden... But I sat down and we practiced the gift of prophecy over each other and encourage one another... Just so you know, at the Prophetic session we do not share at first, we simply sit there, listen for a word, thought or picture and then share with each other and then we share what we asked for prayer.... Thankfully they decided to do it on me first, and before I share with you what they shared with me, let me just share something from my past with you so you will understand why this was impacting to me. I like the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. I like it because its clean, it has an amazing story and some incredible characters. My favorite character is not Frodo, or Aragon, or Gandalf, I mean, they are all awesome, but my favorite character is Sam Wise. I just liked him, and this is not something that many people know, because if I am being honest, he is not a main character and its not something that I share to be honest. But back to the session where I wanted to run away and I am sitting there. Stefan looked at me and said, I have a weird picture for you. He said he sees me as a Character in Lord of the Rings, not a main character, but a side line character, he sees me as Sam Wise. And like Sam Wise, God is not asking you to be a main character here at church, but to simply pick up the ring when its needed and carry it. I broke down! I wept!! God met me there in a way I did not expect, and in a way I did not expect. Some of you might say, God used Lord of the Rings to speak to you, yeah, God will use whatever He needs to, to get through to you, for some it's a Donkey, for me it was something that nobody really knew, but God knew, used Stefan to speak it, and gave me a confidence back then I needed to hear. Not to be a main character, not to carry the whole story, but to just carry the ring for a moment. Thank God!!! My encouragement to you this morning is that if you have not gone to an Empower Yet, it's a great opportunity to learn what the bible says about the Holy Spirits gifts and to start practicing them in a safe place. AND for those of you who have gone before, maybe you should go again, even someone like me who went many times, God spoke to moved in my life in a powerful way.

Today's message! 2024 is wrapping up in a couple of days, 2025 is just around the corner and today **I want to talk to you about Legacy!** A couple of weeks ago I started praying into it, and I felt God placing the word "Legacy" on my heart and after a bit of wrestling, praying, I settled that this is it. Problem was, I could not place my finger on any verses with legacy in it. So I went to biblegateway.com and sure enough, how many verses do you think are in the bible that contain the work legacy? None, nothing, zero... So after I saw that result I thought that legacy was a silly topic and I will leave it for someone else to preach on... The real reason why I felt lead to talk about legacy is partly because it's the end of one year, and the start of another, but more so because of my recent job role change here. I have had the honor to walk with many people here when a loved one passed away and was officiating their funerals. In doing so, you cannot help but see the legacy that they left behind and what is really important to them and to those they left behind. You know, scripture also talks about this in ***Ecclesiastes 7:2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.***

Most of us are recovering from feasting this past week, and those are GREAT! I had a great time and we feasted at many family gatherings, and we will do it again, its not bad, BUT, it is better to go to a house of mourning, because it's the destiny of everyone. I think we forget sometimes that the mortality rate in the last 2000 years or so have been sitting steady at 100%. Death is the destiny of us all, but we all who accepted Jesus also have the Hope we can hold onto for what is to come after death, because death is merely an event for us to pass from here into eternity. This is not a topic that we openly discuss or talk about often but we see in **Psalm 90:12** says **Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.** Do not be fooled and never think of the end, but consider how to live our lives to the fullest for the Lord. While we are still here, we have an opportunity to leave a legacy for others to see! Its not too late!!

A. Why is Legacy Important?

Well, even though we do not find the English word for legacy specifically in scripture anywhere, it does not mean that scripture does not talk about it. But other words that are like legacy; heritage, or inheritance for example you will find a staggering 220 times in the bible. Thankfully we are not just looking for a single verse to support what we are saying, but we are looking canonically at what scripture says. I heard this quote once, not sure who said it: ***"There are no verses in the bible, only books"*** So this morning we will look at what the bible says about legacy and why it's important. But before we look at them, what is legacy exactly? Legacy defined is: money or property left to someone in a will or **it can mean the long-lasting impact of particular events, actions, etc. that took place in the past, or of a person's life.** It's the later part that I want to talk about and let me just say that legacies are not just for the rich, or the famous. We think legacy and we get stuck on the notion that you either have to be rich or famous to leave a legacy, not so, we all leave a legacy one day and we all have different legacies that impact our community, friends and family differently. Also, our legacy is not set in stone, some might feel that because of the family or that you have done too much wrong in your life that you are doomed to leave a legacy that has been set for you. Also not true! Legacy is something that we build as individuals, daily, whether its good or bad, but if we allow God to help us build that legacy, it can be something truly amazing... Billy Graham has this famous quote about legacy. ***"The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith."*** Legacy is not about things we left behind, it's the testimony we leave behind of how we loved God and Loved People around us, its about us fulfilling the great commission and the great command! **2 Corinthians 5:20** **So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"** Does our current testimony reflect this call to others around us? "Come back to God" would your legacy reflect this call one day at your funeral that our lives showed and reflected God's love in such a way that people wanted

to know Him better? As we saw in Psalm 90, it is wisdom if we count the number of our days, because it helps us not to have regret at the end. Studies show that people on their death beds have many regrets, but a few consistent ones that keep coming out are things like: I wish I engaged more with my kids. OR I regret holding onto grudges and not forgiving a friend or family member. OR I regret being too busy and not investing into those around me. There are many more, but these are ones that I have heard personally and at Funerals we hear in the tributes as well how people truly lived their lives, either selfishly for themselves, or that of one glorifying God. As Christians then, we get to leave behind a legacy, not of ourselves, but one of our Savior. There is more at stake for us for what we leave behind. and I want to share some biblical reasons why I think legacy is important. Here are 3 reasons I think its important and some verses to support them, there are more reasons, but these are the ones that stand out to me personally:

- 1. For the Glory of God:** All we do, we do for the Glory of God, and therefore our legacies need to reflect how we did this. **1 Corinthians 6:20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. AND 1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.** Anything and everything we do, we do for the glory of God! Why, because we where bought with the highest price possible! When we live for the glory of God in our daily lives, we will by default leave a good legacy for others to see. So that's it, its that simple right! Simple yes, but hard to do because our flesh gets in the way of ding this. Regardless this is the place we have to start to have a mindset of doing everything for the glory of God. Other methods we can use to leave a good legacy is telling the awesome stories of God!
- 2. God's AWESOME Stories:** When we read scripture we exposed to some incredible stories of amazing people that God used like David or Esther, or Elijah!... There are so many incredible stories and legacies left behind for us to see and we see that these legacies can apply and learn from. Many of us in here would have stories that jump out at us when I would say a line like, who is your favorite prophet from the Old Testament? Or who was your favorite apostle. We get to read and see many amazing men and women in scripture because they left a legacy for us read and to share with our children on what God has done and its our job to pass them on! **Psalm 78.4: We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.** Or there is the example of the ebenezers stones we see in **Joshua 4.21-22: And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?' then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.'"** So we see that we are commanded to spread these amazing stories so that the next generation will know. What I also find that gives me hope, is how many people in the bible almost had bad legacies that they left behind, but God redeemed them. Aaron and Peter are 2 that come to mind. I mean, there was

Aaron with Moses, spoke for Moses a bit, was with him through the plagues, and the Red Sea and then under pressure, he erects a golden calf!? But God came and made him the leader of the Levites, God redeemed him and he left a good legacy. Peter! Oh Peter, he started with following Jesus, and I believe sincerely doing his best to be a disciple of the messiah, and I love how he refused for Jesus to wash his feet and once Jesus tells him why, he goes to the other extreme and says, Lord wash all of me! How he goes to deny Jesus 3 times, but yet in the end God uses him to build His church as we see in Acts and brings the good news to the gentiles! Amazing stories with incredible legacies left behind and we are instructed to pass them along to one another and the next generation, which brings me to the third one...

- 3. Teaching the next generation:** Deuteronomy 6.5-7: You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. There are more than these passages yet that instruct us to teach or instruct the next generation. Why are we suppose to instruct them? Many reasons, but in a big part to leave a legacy so that they would know who God is, what He has done for us, and how they can accomplish the great commission and the great command. Partly this is also a reminder for us that as parents, its our job to disciple our kids. The church will play its part yes, but its up to us to teach and disciple our kids in the way they go! But also, how else will our kids know to endure difficult times unless they have seen that modelled by their parents. Do our children see us as parents pursuing Jesus, or one day, will they ask that question at our funerals if we even served the Lord? I do not want my kids one day to ask that question, but I want them to have the confidence of where I am, this is also a gift to them!

B. How to leave a Legacy

- 1. Be Intentional:** We have to start by being intentional about leaving a good legacy. We will all leave a legacy whether you try to or not. The question is, what kind of legacy will it be. We can either be contributing to those around us in how we show Jesus love or we can be contaminating those around us by living the way the world or culture shows us. If we then want to leave a good or God-Honoring Legacy we have to be intentional in how we do it and when we do it. **Legacy is built everyday!** Legacy does not come all together magically on the day of your funeral, but its built moment by moment, its built with all your interactions with people around you. You know that old saying, “return something you borrowed in better condition than it was given to you” Well, I like that old saying, wish more people would do it, but I like taking it a step further

and ask this question. **When we interact with people, do we leave them in a better condition to when we found them, or are they worse off now since we talked with them?** Do you think its possible that we can leave people in a better condition? I believe that as far as possible, we should all strive to have interactions where people feel God's love and that they would see not our amazing personalities, but the fruit of the Spirit that is pouring out of us and having an impact on them! Some of you who are young may not think of what legacy you leave behind, because, well, you are young and its easy to associate legacy with an obituary. Do not fall into this lie of the enemy but remember **Psalm 90:12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**

2. **Be Accountable:** Accountability is very misunderstood today. When many of us talk about accountability and many times when I see people in my office, I ask what their accountability looks like, I am surprised how many say they have accountability, but never goes and gives an account of what is going on. Its like every one is waiting for someone else to ask what is going on in their lives, and if they are not specific enough we hide that from them. Accountability is not waiting for someone to come and ask you how you are doing, Scripture teaches us to **GIVE AN ACCOUNT! Romans 14:12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.** We will be held accountable before God and that we are meant as brothers and sisters in Christ to hold each other accountable here on earth for our words and actions. **James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.** It's because we are not accountable to one another that many times, not always, but many times our prayers don't feel effective or seem like they are doing anything is because we do not confess our sins to one another and pray for one another to be healed! Each one of us should have friends who can help us make the right decisions and help walk us to restoration when we've made mistakes. It's hard to see when people who love God, and I have no doubt they do, fall to sin and it's like that legacy gets broken. BUT, look at **Psalm 103:10-12 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.** Your legacy is not broken because you messed up!! Remember Aaron, David, Peter, Paul, they all messed up, I have messed up!! BUT GOD! In His grace comes and removes our transgressions, our sins, our mistakes as far as the east is from the west for those who fear Him. We need to make sure that we give an account to others and pray for one another! I will say, reading this verse and meditating on it, did bring up a 3rd point when it talked about how high the heavens are, because it reminded me of another important bit, its not just our legacy we are leaving behind, but its WHOSE...

3. Whose Legacy are you leaving? Pastor Stefan has been taking us through a series called “What does the Bible say” and in there he talked about identity. He used a phrase I would like to repeat here, he said, **“you will never know who you are, until you know whose you are.”** I would like to use that and apply it to legacy this morning and expand on it a little. **It’s not about your legacy being left here on earth, it’s about whose legacy you leave behind.** It’s not about you! Its about Him, its about His Glory right! I think we get caught up in leaving a legacy we are not sure which part of ourselves to leave behind, but again, its not about my legacy that gets left behind, its about HIS legacy. **Romans 14:8 - For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.** Once we understand with our whole being that we belong to the Lord and that we are leaving His legacy behind, it’s a lot easier to be intentional about it. One way I have always look at it is to marvel how wonderful, how big and how majestic the Lord is. When I meditate on that, its actually easy to leave His legacy instead of mine. One place I like to mediate on the greatness and majesty and the shear creativeness of God is in nature and in space. Now I know space seems like a weird thing to meditate on, but space is so cool! I love the fact that there are so many stars and so many galaxies out there that we have not seen yet, but God created them. Take a look at some of these pictures taken by the James Webb telescope, just awesome eh! Let me share with you why I am in awe. If we start here on earth, in our solar system, we have a Star, the sun, and nine plantes, some say eight, I say nine, because I like to include people and plantes I like, no one should be alone.. Now our little solar system is in the Milky Way Galaxy, which is not a very big galaxy and it contains about 100 to 400 billion stars! That’s a lot, and we are approximately here somewhere... Now when we talk about numbers, especially big numbers like million, billion, or even a trillion, those are some big numbers, but we do not understand how big they really are. I just said that there are 100 to 400 billion stars, that’s a lot, but how much is a lot?? Let me give you an illustration of how much it is... If I would count to a million it would take me just under 12 days to count to a million if I count non stop every second of every day. If I continue to get to a billion, it will take me almost 32 years. If I want to get to a trillion, it will take me 32,000 years! Recorded history is about 5,000 years just as an FYI. That’s the difference between a million, billion and a trillion. Now we talked about our galaxy having 100 to 400 billion stars, can you just let that sink in for a little bit, that is a lot!!! Now, that is just our galaxy, any idea how many galaxies are out there in the universe? **Best estimates are between 200 billion and 2 trillion galaxies in the universe, each containing billions of stars!!! WOW!!!** Mind blowing, and then we get to read verses like these... **Psalm 8:3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human**

beings that you care for them? Or Isaiah 40:12a Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? God measured the whole universe with His fingers, He is that BIG, that marvelous to behold the wonder of His creation, and its but one small part of God because He is infinite, and we have a chance here on earth, right now to leave His legacy behind, instead of our own, is that not way better!! Once we get a glimpse of whose legacy we are leaving behind, it becomes a lot easier to do so when we know whose legacy we are leaving behind! This is all good, but how do we do it day to day?

C. Let's get Practical about Legacy

In closing, we are going to get a little practical here this morning. Talking about building a legacy everyday let's look back at 2024 what kind of legacy did you build, how do we do this practically... There are many chunks of scripture you can turn to for that, here is a couple: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 13, Galatians 5, Philippians 4, the book of James, etc. are all GREAT examples of how to live a Christian life and they are simple to apply, to easy but simple. I am not sure about you, but I NEED SIMPLE when I try to effect change in my life. I was going to end this sermon differently, but I felt in my prayers that God was asking me to do it a different way and it involves me getting vulnerable to all of you. It will also put me in a spot of where you can keep me accountable, so this is a good thing! What I want to share with you this morning is something I really have not shared openly from any stage or group setting, because I think its so ridiculously silly, and simple, that I am embarrassed to share it... but then again I am simple and it works for me. Ready?? Its so simple, you will not even need to write it down... I call it **ISH**... YES, ISH... Its my own made up acronym... It stands for Integrity, Selflessness and Humility. Now, ISH has been 20 years in the making for me, and I know, in 20 years I have yet to come up with a better acronym. Let me explain. Back in December 2004, 20 years ago I became a Small Group Leader, and I had a couple of problems I was working on, namely Purity and Lying... Now I was active in working on them, but during the prayer and fasting month in January, God told me to start working on thing everyday. Basically ignore everything else, and work on **Integrity**... **Proverbs 12:22 The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.** So there is that! So daily, that was the cry of my heart, and for those of you who knew me back then, I would often use the phrase: "Oh, I just lied" and then repeat a truthful statement. This simple step helped me to overcome and defeat lying by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Then, 3 years later, in January 2008, again at a Prayer and Fasting Month, about a month before I got married, God gave me my second thing to work on... **Selflessness**... was my next step because even though I thought I was a selfless person, turns out.... Not so much, I was a very self-centered selfish individual and I was about to find that out through a lovely little life event called marriage, where I was gifted by the Lord a very gentle wife who was OK with me being a selfish, self absorbed person... Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

The last part of ISH, **Humility**, I cannot exactly remember when God showed me that one, I know it was a January, but not entirely sure which year, but the last part He added was humility, which gives us ISH. I remember it was a Sunrise Summit where we sat in the Chapel against the stone wall when I came across **James 4:6 God opposes the proud but shows grace to the humble**. Read it many times, but that morning it just stuck with me and I knew in my Spirit it was the next and last one for quite a while for me to work on, because it will probably take me the rest of my life to do so. Now every time I would do something that would be selfish, or I would lie, or I would feel pride hit me, I would just say to myself inside, ISH... And then I would correct a lie, put myself second, or last or work on my pride. Very simple, but not very easy... 20 years later, I am still working on ISH, and I have tried adding an L for love, but it never stuck, God wanted and wants me to continue to work on these 3 areas of my life so that I can leave a legacy that reflects Him, not me!

One day when God calls me home, I do not want my legacy to be the guy who finished a bunch of video games where people say, wow he was amazing at Call of Duty or he had amazing strategies in Command and Conquer, or as the guy who watched an entire season of Stargate in one sitting, or shot a huge trophy buck with my bow... It does not matter!!

None of this matters... **Ecclesiastes 1:2** says it best, **that everything is meaningless!** I want to leave a legacy to my children, to my family and friends, to my community that I loved God, and Loved people, and by my love, people would know that I love Jesus!! I want my life to reflect the fruit of the Holy Spirit through my actions and my faith, and my character and yes personally for me to walk in Integrity, Selflessness and Humility! But above all, that its more of Jesus and less of me everyday!!! And man, I fall short, and I stumble, BUT GOD, but by His grace and love, I will continue to run the race while I have time left by His grace alone, living a leaving a legacy for living a life set apart for His Glory.... What is your legacy going to be? Let's get practical.... **REVIEW of 2024 - Did this last year reflect the legacy you wanted to leave behind?** If you look back at it now, was it greed, pride, laziness, selfishness, rebelling, materialism? What was it? We are going to take a moment and just ask the Lord, what do I need to confess, lay at the foot of the cross from the past year. We will only take a moment, and let me lead you in a prayer... **PRAY....**

PREVIEW for 2025 - Are there any changes God is asking you to make this next year?

What part of your legacy is He asking you to work on? What does He want you to leave behind? What's important is what will you do with the time that has been given to you? We are going to take this moment to ask Him, and maybe He will show you now, or show you in January like he did with me, either way, we are going to close with one more prayer...

PRAY....

If you want to receive some prayer, the prayer room is available to you and there are people who would love to pray with you now. **Happy New Year Church, see you on Tuesday!!**