

I had visited her before but as I visited this spring I had to comment again on the beauty of her home and its wonderful wooded setting she and her husband had developed over the years. With the recent warmth everything was in bloom. It was hard to imagine that a major street in town was just a block away. The woman, in her mid-80's, shared with me the story of not only that home but previous homes that she and her husband had lived in over the years. She told me that when they got married they lived in an apartment. She told me that she developed a system for savings. She had a number of envelopes and each pay-day she would put money into each of the envelopes. The envelope that had the largest amount of savings was label "down payment for house." After two year of marriage and with a child on the way they had enough money for a down payment for their first home. It was relatively easy to save because she put just about all of her paycheck in the envelope for the house. She told me that the house was a starter house for them and once they moved into that house that she immediately started a new envelope for the down payment on their next house. It was a bit harder to save for the next home because she stayed home once she had her baby. That was the custom in the early 50's.

Yet, six years later there was enough money saved to purchase the next home that was large enough to raise their two children through their High School years. But the saving didn't stop there. She thought of the home that she and her husband might live in once the kids were gone and into their retirement years. That saving process brought them to the home where I visited. She and her husband bought lot in a wooded area in the center of Omaha and they personally designed the home. She said they moved in that home about 30 years ago and she never had a need to save for another house because this was the house of their dreams. I agreed, a wonderful home in a beautiful setting.

Through the process of developing a saving system that provided money for holiday gifts, cars, family vacations, education for their children and the purchase of houses this woman provided wonderful leadership within their household. Leadership is expressed in the home, work site, community in many different fashions. This particular woman was an excellent leader in household management.

Leadership can truly transform lives. That was the case for Mike D'Antoni. He arrived in Milan, Italy to play professional basketball in the summer of 1977 as a defensive specialist who could not score. He'd been a productive point guard in his first two seasons at Marshall University, averaging more than 15 points. Head coach Carl Tracy trusted D'Antoni, and in turn, D'Antoni, trusted himself. But Tacy bailed for Wake Forest before D'Antoni's senior year and uncertainty bred anxiety. "The old guy knew me," D'Antoni says. "The new guy didn't." His shot faltered and his numbers dipped. Yet he was drafted into the NBA but D'Antoni put up fewer than three shots per game, afraid to let it fly. "It was the yips," he recalled. "I choked, more or less. I got to the point I could hardly make a lay-up... I didn't believe in myself." He became a defensive specialist but nobody in the NBA wanted him so he ended up in Milan. In that Italian League he became famous for picking fights with opposing players. He was ready to quit after two years in Milan and haul his broken shot home to West Virginia. But before he left the Milan team hired a new head coach, Dan Peterson, from Chicago. The new coach recognized that D'Antoni's problem was not his shooting stroke. It was his psyche. "You're my point guard," the new coach assured him. "No matter what, I am never going to take you out, and if we lose, it's not your fault. It's mine."

Coach Peterson challenged D'Antoni to hoist at least 12 shots per game, regardless of how many he made. "If you go 2 for 19, I won't say a word," the coach vowed. "If you go 1 of 11, we're going to talk, because you didn't take 12 shots." Coach Peterson cured D'Antoni shooting problems by challenging his perspective. *Think about taking, not making.* Over 13 seasons in Milan, D'Antoni won five Italian championships, two European titles and scored more than 5,500 points. (Sports Illustrated, May 7, 2018, article by Lee Jenkins).

Leaders see our talents and then invite us to use them. Coach Peterson provided wonderful leadership for his Milan basketball team and for Mike D'Antoni in particular. He told him to take shots and not worry about the results. Taking shots in basketball was a gift that D'Antoni had, but he had lost all confidence in. Once D'Antoni started doing that which he was good at the results followed. That is wonderful advice for all of us.

After retiring from playing basketball he started coaching. He is currently the coach of the Houston Rockets. He has carried on the leadership tradition of Coach Peterson that helped him flourish. Early this season one of his players was in a shooting slump. After the player missed three shots to open a game the player's head sunk. D'Antoni called a time out and talked to the player. He said to him, "When you miss your hundredth shot I am going to take you out. So you have 97 misses to go." The player went on to score 21 points in the game and was bouncing around with a great smile on his face. D'Antoni's team this season had the best record in the NBA. His star player is the leading candidate for the MVP (Most Valuable Player) in the NBA. His team scored the second most points in the NBA this season. The Houston Rockets are currently competing in the semi-finals for the NBA championship.

As leaders, we can see the talents that another person has and provide encouragement for them. That is what Jesus did. He recruited the 12 disciples and helped them develop their gifts and talents. In our lesson today there is the issue of replacing one of the leaders, Judas. As disciples of Christ we find guidelines for leadership from our lesson in Acts 1. The disciples had a primary guideline in selecting a replacement for Judas. The individual chosen was to have been with Jesus throughout his three year ministry and present when the resurrected Christ conversed with them the forty days following the Resurrection.

Let's connect that with our leadership. As we maintain leadership in various settings, our home, place of work or community, we will do our best as we embrace the values that we find in Jesus. The early leaders of the church heard Jesus embrace traditional values but also update those teaching that needed updating as they remembered him saying "You have heard it said, but I say unto you." Remember, "You have heard it said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, ...if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also..." The early leaders in the church remembered seeing Jesus embrace outcasts like lepers that mean-spirited people derided and loving folk kept at a distance although they might give them alms. Jesus embraced them and somehow the embrace brought healing. The early leaders of the church were instructed by the resurrected Jesus and gave witness to all about the new life that we have in Christ. Matthias was selected and the leadership team in the early church moved forward.

One of the leaders I have admired over the past couple of decades is a lawyer at Baird Holm law firm, located in the Woodmen Tower. I met him as we were both doing work with the various United Methodist congregations in Omaha. Tom maintains the values of Jesus in all he does, in his local church, in the larger church connection, as well as in his marriage and family. He has a true love for the church and its mission. He glows with pride as he shares about the activities of his wife and children. Those same values Tom carries with him on the job. Tom's legal work is excellent as he provides attention to details and truly cares for his clients. Yet, Tom felt a yearning to provide another avenue for practical leadership as a disciple of Christ. He thought of many options and prayed for God to give him guidance.

Whenever he went to work on the Interstate he would get off at 13<sup>th</sup> Street, drive north to Farnum, turn left, and drive 4 blocks to his office. One day he had to drop something off at 14<sup>th</sup> and Jones. After he did, he drove up to 16<sup>th</sup> and turned right to head down to his office. Right at 16<sup>th</sup> and Jones he knew what it was God was calling him to do. It was just under his nose, three blocks from his office. Do you recall what is at 16<sup>th</sup> and Jones? Yes, Douglas County Jail. Tom called the chaplain there and asked if he could start a class with inmates. The answer was "Yes." Now Tom has taught a class every Thursday afternoon for years at Douglas County Jail. In fact, overtime enough other volunteers came on board that there is Bible study every day and worship on

Sundays. The classes happen in what is called the "God mod," it is the jail block for about 25 men that have volunteered to be in this particular jail block because it offers Bible study every day and worship on Sundays.

We will do our best as we do what we are gifted to do and embrace the values of Jesus in the process. I would like to conclude by telling you about Harriet and Mildred. They knew their calling in life, it was to teach. That is where they provided leadership, molding and training young minds. They were born around 1910 to 1915. They started teaching in Chicago in the early 30's. Most teachers were young because back in the 30's once you got married and had a child you did not teach anymore. That was just the way it was back then. Harriet and Mildred never married. I am not sure if it was their commitment to teaching or the right man did not come along for one or the other. They lived on the second floor of the bungalow they grew up in. Their parents lived on the first floor. Overtime they cared for their parents as they aged. After their parents died they moved to the first floor and rented out the second floor. They each taught for over forty years. That was their calling in life and they did it well, school year after school year. The values of Jesus were bedrock in their lives. I met them in the first church I served. Their leadership flowed over in church as well as they taught children in Sunday-School for decades, were in the choir, active in UMW and all parts of church life. Since they were retired when Marjorie and I met them, were filled with loving hearts, and took pity on us, they volunteered to babysit our children once or twice a month. Daryl and Mackenzie, our children, each have a good understanding of finances and plan well. Mackenzie, I would even call her frugal. To some degree I credit Harriet and Mildred for that. They would take them to Toys R Us and tell them they each had five dollars to spend. They could either buy a small toy today or save their money and buy a more expensive toy later. Each visit meant another \$5. Sometimes our children would wait 5 or 6 weeks and buy a real nice toy. That was leadership that Harriet and Mildred provided to our children as they were in grade school. Those lessons have served Daryl and Mackenzie well, who are now in their early 30's.

Leadership comes in all forms and it can be enhanced as it embraces the values of Jesus.

You know, thinking about it, maybe Daryl and Mackenzie also picked up their healthy fiscal practices by the woman who had all those envelopes for savings; for holiday gifts, cars, family vacations, education for their children and the purchase of houses. Daryl and Mackenzie know this woman who provided wonderful leadership within her household because she is their grand-mother, my Mother. Happy Mother's Day to each mother here today and all for you have done for your children.