

A Sermon by Rev. Shavon Arline-Bradley

You

Forgot to

Leave a

Message

Psalm 78:1-8

301 South Alfred Street Alexandria, VA 22314
Rev. Dr. Howard John Wesley

#wearealfredstreet #asbc #selah

Sunday, February 16, 2020

Preacher: Rev. Shavon Arline-Bradley

Sermon: You Forgot to Leave a Message

Scripture: Psalm 78-18



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Sermon Summary

In her sermon "You Forgot to Leave a Message" based on the 78th Psalm, Rev. Shavon Arline-Bradley elaborated on the church's monthly theme of "Roots" by connecting the history of our past to the problems we face today and how to deal with them. By using a metaphor of leaving messages on an answering machine or voicemail for someone to store and go back to later, she reveals the importance of "leaving a message" about our past experiences. Because history repeats itself, those who experience and know it have a responsibility to "leave a message" for the future generations so they can thrive. Rev. Arline-Bradley believes that there are times when we have failed to prepare future generations to survive the familiar present day problems because:

1. We have failed to share the impact of our history
2. We have forgotten to share the impact of our rebellion
3. We have forgotten to share the impact of our testimonies

Notes for Facilitators:

As we approach the halfway point in this Village season, we encourage you to remember the leadership principle of “sharing the load.” Invite your fellow Villagers to rotate hosting responsibilities. Begin to identify Villagers that you may be able to apprentice as up and coming facilitators. For individuals that have a gift in either capacity, encourage them to save the date of Saturday, July 11th when our next training will take place.

Getting To Know You Questions:

1. Rev. Arline-Bradley shared that when exciting things happened in her life, like her favorite sports team doing well, or being proposed to, she ran around her house because she likes to “celebrate good things”. What are some good things happening in your life right now, big or small, that you can celebrate?
2. The preacher described some “old school” memories like rotary phones and doilies under the voicemail. What is something that brings back nostalgia for you?



Into The Bible Questions:

1. Rev. Arline-Bradley said that Psalm 78 is a specific type of Psalm called a “maskil”, a poem meant for wisdom and instruction. Even though Psalm 78 is a difficult text to hear, since it deals with Israel’s history of rebelling against God, how can hearing about others’ past mistakes make you wiser?
2. Re-read Psalm 78:5-8, and pay particular attention to the portion of verse 8 that reads “and that they should not be like their ancestors, a stubborn and rebellious generation.” What do you not want to repeat from previous generations?
3. In Matthew 13:35, Jesus quoted Psalm 78:2 in an address to the crowds. What stories have been hidden across generations in your family and community, and how might you begin the process of sharing those stories today?

Life Application Questions:

1. In her opening prayer, Rev. Arline-Bradley said “the messenger is a mess, but the Master is merciful”. We often mask our imperfections and don’t share our struggles, but that can stop us from recognizing and experiencing God’s mercy.
 - a) Why do you struggle with being vulnerable?
 - b) What practical steps can you take to be more vulnerable with God and trusted people?
2. The sermon stressed how powerful our stories of rebellion can be. Across generations, there are stories of turning from God’s will. What stories would you have liked to have heard from the generations before you? How could these life-saving messages have made a difference in your life and walk?
3. The preacher emphasized how important our stories are and even modeled what that vulnerability could look like in her own testimony. What keeps us from sharing our own testimonies and who have we kept our stories from that might need to hear them?



"Can I Push It?"

Rev. Arline-Bradley reminded us that Black History is American History. Some might say that we have a hard time viewing Black History as "American" History because it's viewed as a stain on America. What in our own personal, family, or community histories have we also tried to deny because of the stain it might make on us or our reputation?

Spirit Work:

1. Rev. Arline-Bradley said that we fail because we aren't vulnerable and we also don't share our testimonies. As we prepare to enter SEEK 2020, prayerfully identify people that you can be vulnerable with as you support each other during the fast.
2. It is Black History Month! Think about your current story and research a new fact in Black History that encourages you in this particular season. Be ready to share what you learned in our next Village session for our own unique Black History moments.



Activity:

1. **Show n' Tell:** Rev. Arline-Bradley encourages us to share our stories. Draw a picture, pull up a photo on your phone, or choose anything you have to talk about something in your history or your family's history that is special to you. Share it with the Village group in a 1-minute show n' tell.
2. The preacher shared a moving account of her own history and testimony. Have each person write a current struggle, be as specific or general as you feel comfortable (i.e. financial, marriage trouble, unemployment, low self-esteem, etc.) on a strip of paper. Fold them, place them in a bowl and mix them up. Have each villager pick one. As each person reads one aloud, see if someone can share a brief testimony that might encourage another person along that struggle. If not, pray in that moment for what is written.

**E-Village facilitators can utilize the polling or messaging feature in Zoom to conduct this activity*

Additional Question for Married Couples Villages:

1. Rev. Arline-Bradley talked about the importance of sharing our stories with our children, but it can also be important to share our stories with our partners. How has sharing or not sharing parts of your stories influenced your marriage? How have you been more conscious of your own story since being married?
2. The sermon highlighted that what we have faced can determine how we fare. What moments have you faced in your marriage that influence how you have been able to fare in the present? What have those moments taught you about your marriage and/or God?

Additional Question for Young Adult Villages:

1. The preacher exhorted both brothers and sisters to “change the narrative” of God’s activity in our lives. She shares examples of what to not tie our identity to:
 - a) “Brothers, your manhood is not dependent on how much [money] you make but how you work with what you got and handle what’s in front of you.”
 - b) “Sisters, your womanhood is not dependent on having a [spouse] but [valuing] what you have right now, and that’s a relationship with God”.In dealing with not having everything you want yet, where else have you still seen God’s activity and goodness?
2. We are now approaching the moment in our life where there are children and teens looking up to us as role models. What stories would you tell the young people of our church and how are these stories the same or different from what you received growing up?

Additional Questions for Parents’ Villages:

1. This week’s message discussed the value of sharing our history with our children. What historical moments or figures could you use as inspiration for your child and their unique gifts, challenges, and interests?
2. Psalm 78:4 talks about not hiding our stories from our children. What stories have you been hesitant to share with your children? What could be the cost or benefit of sharing these stories?

Additional Questions for Women Villages:

1. Black women often experience the weight of very high expectations and there can be little room to fail. With all these expectations to be perfect, it can be refreshing to hear the real stories of others. Share a story of your own rebellion and how you survived it as a way to encourage another sister to know that she is not alone.
2. Rev. Arline-Bradley talked about the history and legacy of Alfred Street Baptist Church and the stories of those who first occupied these pews including an enslaved woman who dared to use her witness and her money so we could be who we are today. What does her story teach you about your own story in the life of this church?