

What We Carry Forward

Enough • Week 2 • All Saints Sunday • November 1, 2026

Hebrews 12:1–2; John 16:20–22

Some things are worth keeping for reasons that would never make sense at a garage sale. A recipe card with a stain across the corner. A tool with a worn handle. A photograph that isn't particularly clear. Someone else might see something old. You see a person.

When I wear or see this cap, I remember my Dad, Keith Motter, who passed away with cancer five years ago this week. He had a collection of caps like this on the wall outside his bedroom. It bears the name of our home church, New Hope UMC. I recall his life of hard work, providing for our family and educating agriculture students. And I remember how, while recovering from emergency triple bypass surgery, he reconnected with Christ and recommitted his life and found renewed purpose.

Last week, in our series *Enough*, we talked about gifts we overlook. Today, on All Saints Sunday, we remember some of the people through whom those gifts came.

When the church says “saints,” we don't mean spiritual superstars. We mean people who belong to God, the living and the dead, joined in what we call the communion of saints. Today we remember ordinary people whose lives were held in God's love, people who sometimes got it right and sometimes needed forgiveness. People we miss. And we remember them as whole people.

Some of what we carry from them is precious. Some of it may be painful. Sometimes both come through the same relationship. We may remember someone who helped us feel safe and loved: a friend, teacher, neighbor, or church member who offered care we didn't receive elsewhere.

We may also remember things that were never resolved. Words we wish had been spoken. An apology that never came. A relationship we kept hoping would become different. We can miss what we had. We can also grieve what we never received. There is room for all of that today.

We do not have to make someone flawless to honor their life. We do not have to manufacture gratitude for what harmed us. And we do not have to choose between being thankful for someone and wishing, with everything in us, that we had more time.

That is part of why I'm grateful for the way Jesus speaks in today's reading from the Gospel of John. He is with his friends on the night before his death. They have shared meals, traveled together, asked questions, and begun to imagine a future with him. Now he is talking about leaving. He speaks directly about the sorrow ahead.

"You will weep and mourn," he tells them (John 16:20). He knows they will hurt because their relationship with him matters.

We sometimes struggle to offer that same understanding to ourselves. We think we should be doing better by now. A song comes on. We reach for the phone to call someone who can't answer. We sit down at the family table and notice an empty chair, and the loss feels close again. Grief comes and goes in waves.

In the verses just before our reading, when Jesus speaks about being gone for "a little while," he is speaking about his death and resurrection, not handing grieving people a timetable. Nothing in Jesus' words suggests a deadline for those experiences. You do not have to prove your trust in God by missing someone less.

Jesus does, however, offer his friends a promise. Their sorrow will turn to joy (16:20b). That promise has a particular foundation: they will see him alive. He adds, "No one will take your joy from you" (16:22).

This is the foundation of our hope today, too. We believe God raised Jesus from death, and that the life God gives is stronger than the death we fear.

We cannot explain every loss. But we trust that the people we love are held by God even when we can no longer hold them ourselves. We trust that our future, and theirs, rests in a love death cannot finally defeat. That hope can live alongside tears.

And he promises, "I will see you again" (16:22a). Their future does not rest entirely on their ability to understand what is happening or to hold themselves together. That is something we can lean on when our own strength is thin.

Hebrews gives that hope a picture. The writer describes a great cloud of witnesses surrounding the community of faith.

Just before our passage, we hear stories of people who trusted God across generations. Some saw remarkable things happen; others endured suffering and died without seeing everything they had hoped for.

The writer doesn't say our loved ones are watching our every move. Instead, the passage points us toward the testimony of those who lived before us. Their stories remain part of our story.

We know something about that. Someone taught us that a question could be asked without being laughed at. Someone stayed beside us through a difficult season, and their presence helped us believe we had not been abandoned by God.

For many of us, faith became believable because we encountered it in another person's care. That, my friends, is grace. God's undeserved, unconditional love reaching toward us even before we have done anything to earn it. Often that love reaches us through ordinary people.

And God continues to work through those relationships, helping us grow in love ourselves. This is also grace, maturing us in our faith.

But Hebrews adds something we might overlook on a day of remembrance: an invitation to lay things aside. The writer pictures a runner setting down whatever hinders the journey, including the sin that entangles us, the ways we turn away from love and cause harm. Here is a helpful question: What helps us live in love? And what keeps pulling us away from it?

We can carry forward a grandparent's kindness without carrying forward that grandparent's prejudice. We can appreciate a parent's hard work without accepting the belief that our worth depends on working until we collapse.

Honoring a person doesn't mean repeating every pattern in that person's life. You are allowed to learn a different way. You are allowed to ask for support with a responsibility that has become too much.

And let me be clear: your grief is not a failure you need to put down. Being harmed by someone is not your sin. The invitation is to receive help with what keeps harming us, rather than assume we must carry it forever.

That change rarely happens through determination alone. It may involve an honest conversation, counseling, practical assistance, a recovery community, or people who patiently help us practice another way. Needing that support does not mean we lack faith. It means we are human. God has given us one another.

Sometimes the most loving thing we carry into the future is a healthier beginning. A person learns to apologize and ask forgiveness because apologies were

missing in their childhood. Someone seeks help because they want the people who come after them to know that help is something they can receive.

And we don't have to become the hero who repairs an entire family history. Hebrews tells us where to look: to Jesus. It calls him the pioneer and perfecter of faith, the one who opens the way and brings God's work to fulfillment.

The people we remember may have helped us take steps along that way. Jesus remains the one we follow. We can receive their gifts while allowing Christ to lead us into something new.

Hebrews even says Jesus endured the cross for the sake of "the joy that was set before him" (12:2b). The joy he promised his friends is the joy he walked toward.

So today, I want to offer a gentle invitation. Choose what fits where you are.

Perhaps there is a gift you want to cherish and continue. Tell the story. Share the recipe. Teach the skill. Offer the kind of welcome that once helped you feel at home.

Or perhaps today is a day to grieve. You may need to speak someone's name or sit with a memory. Receiving comfort is enough for today.

Or perhaps there is something you need help to change. You don't need a complete plan. A beginning might sound like, "This has become too much for me," or "I want things to be different, and I'm not sure where to start."

God's love is already present at that beginning. You do not have to earn it by making progress quickly.

This is part of what Enough means. Enough doesn't mean everything is resolved or every grief is finished. It means what the Lord told Paul: "My grace is enough for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Our lives are more than what we accumulate or achieve. We receive care. We learn to care.

As a congregation, we can be a community where a grieving person has company, where a child is known by name, where questions are welcomed, and where someone without a supportive family finds people who care.

On All Saints Sunday, we speak names and remember lives. Behind every name is a life far larger than we can describe—relationships, memories, joys, regrets, and love that continues to matter.

We entrust those lives to God. And we entrust our own lives to God, too. We give thanks for what gave life. We make room for what still hurts. We ask for help with what needs to change. And through it all, we look to Jesus.

In this time of remembrance, there is nothing you need to produce. You may remember with gratitude, with tears, with mixed feelings, or without words. Together, we place these lives, and our own, within the care of God.