

The sermon “Passing on the Word That Has Carried Us This Far”

From Psalm 147:12–20 & John 1:10–18

By Rev. Peter Blank

At Plymouth Presbyterian Church

St. Helens, Oregon

January 4, 2026

“Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem,” it says.

Psalm 147 is a song of gratitude shaped by memory. It names what God has done over time: strengthening gates, blessing children, filling the community with daily bread, sending a word that runs swiftly. This is not the praise of people who are new to faith. It is the praise of people who have *seen some things*—who know that stability, peace, and belonging are gifts received, not guarantees secured.

John’s Gospel takes that long memory and draws it into focus: “The Word became flesh and lived among us.” The Word that carried God’s people through centuries did not stay fixed in one form. It moved. It changed location. It took on human life. And even when it was misunderstood or resisted, it did not disappear.

That matters for us, because we are living in a season where change is unavoidable.

Legacy is often misunderstood as preserving things exactly as they were. But Psalm 147 does not praise God for freezing time. It praises God for *faithfulness across change*. The gates were rebuilt. The people returned. Life took new shape. Yet the same Word sustained them through it all.

Legacy, in faith, is not about holding tightly—it is about handing faithfully.

For many of us, the Word was passed on in ways that now feel almost ordinary: showing up for worship week after week; learning the Lord’s Prayer by heart; hearing Scripture read aloud long before we could read it ourselves. These practices shaped us more deeply than we realized at the time. They carried us through seasons we could not have imagined when we first learned them.

Now the question before us is not, *How do we keep everything the same?*

The question is, *How do we pass on what truly matters?*

- Passing on the Word may mean telling younger generations why certain things mattered—not so they will copy them exactly, but so they will understand the faith beneath them. We keep our Christmas decorations up until Jan. 6, the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas because Christmas season starts on Dec. 25. Advent starts preparing us for Christmas 4 Sundays before. They may not know anything other than what the retail and business world tells them. “Christmas follows on the heels of Halloween – Nov 1.” They may not know the faith that informs why certain things matter.
- Passing on the Word may mean saying, “This hymn carried me when I was grieving,” or “This church taught me how to forgive,” or “This community showed up when I had nothing left to offer.”

- It may also mean accepting that the Word will be heard differently than we heard it. John reminds us that even when Christ came in the flesh, not everyone recognized him. Change does not mean failure. It means the Word is still alive—still moving, still seeking a home among real people.
- And sometimes, passing on the Word means stepping back with trust. Trusting that the grace we received is strong enough to meet new questions. Trusting that God is not finished with the church yet. Trusting that the Word that became flesh does not depend on our preferences to remain present.

From Christ's fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. That is not a limited supply. It is a living gift.

So we praise God—not only for where we have been, but for the faithfulness that will continue beyond us. We pass on the Word not because we fear losing it, but because it has already carried us safely this far—and we trust it will carry others, too.

“Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem.”  
For the Word still dwells among us.  
And the story is not over.

Amen.