

Church Campout
Elizebeth Smith Friedman
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Today's going to be a little different from normal. Last weekend was our annual church campout. I came down with Covid so didn't make it there. I appreciate Richard stepping in up there & Ryan for preaching here. It's nice to not be needed! This morning I'll be preaching an expanded version of what I had for at the campout. For those who don't know, I try to tie in something historical I've recently read to some biblical truths. In the past we've used things from mountain climbing disasters to the building of the transcontinental railroad to WW2 people or events to Marie Dorion as springboards to truths of God. This morning we'll do the same.

Many people go through life without any recognition for what they did or accomplished. It happened in biblical times & in ours. Others do get recognition. Does this mean they're more important? Not at all. This past year I've read 2 books regarding a lady who accomplished great things but was never, during her lifetime, recognized for it.¹ William F. Friedman & his team of cryptanalysts (expert in deciphering coded messages without prior knowledge of the key) broke the Japanese PURPLE code a few months before Pearl Harbor & continued to break codes throughout WW2. During his lifetime he was considered to be America's leading cryptologist & was recognized as such in his day & is today remembered as the godfather of the National Security Agency. His wife, however, remained relatively unknown until more than 25 years after her death. Although she's often referred to as *the wife of William Friedman*, she enjoyed great success in cryptology in her own right. In fact, although her husband is credited with numerous contributions to cryptology, it was his wife who introduced him to the field & who was, arguably, better at it. Elizebeth Smith graduated from college with an English Lit major in 1915. She worked briefly as a high school principal, loved Shakespeare, & languages. Around 1916 she was looking for a job & visited the Chicago library where she talked to a librarian who thought she might know of something. The librarian called an eccentric millionaire & told him he might be interested in hiring

¹ Jason Fagone, *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, & the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies*; Amy Butler Greenfield, *The Woman All Spies Fear: Code Breaker Elizebeth Smith Friedman & Her Hidden Life*

Elizebeth. He appeared later that day in his limo & drove Elizebeth to Riverbank, his 325-acre estate, where they discussed what she might do for him there. George Fabyan named his estate, *Riverbank Laboratories*, & the grounds included a Japanese Garden, a private zoo, a Roman-style swimming pool, a lighthouse, a Dutch-style windmill, gardens, grottoes, greenhouses, a farm, a research laboratory, & a farmhouse remodeled by Frank Lloyd Wright. At Riverbank, both William, who was already working there as a plant biologist & early geneticist, & Elizebeth joined a team Fabyan put together to prove that Francis Bacon had written Shakespeare's works & left coded clues throughout the 1623 First Folio & other texts. William & Mary were married in 1917 & it wasn't long until they came to the conclusion that the Bacon theory was completely false & there weren't hidden codes in Shakespeare's works. But it was a training ground for them as Fabyan had gathered historical information on secret writings. Military cryptography had been deemphasized after the Civil War to the point where there were only a handful of people in the country who knew anything about the subject. 2 of those people were now Elizebeth & William. Just before Elizebeth & William were married, the US entered WW1. Fabyan then established the *Riverbank Department of Ciphers*, with the Friedmans in charge, & offered their services to the government. *For the 1st 8 months of the war, William & Elizebeth, & their team at Riverbank, did all the codebreaking for every part of the US government: for the State Department, the War department (army), the navy, & the Department of Justice.*² During this time, the Friedmans developed many of the principles of modern cryptology. The new technology of radio meant that codebreaking was now an even more valuable skill & so William & Elizebeth trained military personnel in deciphering messages & also created their own sophisticated code systems. While Elizebeth was never formally trained as a codebreaker, she was highly skilled at it. She was extraordinarily good at recognizing patterns & would make intuitive guesses that usually turned out to be right. She would help win World Wars & capture criminals & spies. Her work laid the groundwork for the encryption that's still being used today in email & cell phones.

² Jason Fagone

After the war ended, the Friedmans left Riverbank in 1921 to work for the government directly. Before this, they had both been highly recruited by various government organizations but Fabyan monitored their mail & those letters never made it to them. In the 1920s, Elizebeth ran a cryptanalytic unit under the Coast Guard to monitor boot-leggers & rum-runners during prohibition. During this time the Coast Guard loaned her at times to the Bureau of Narcotics, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Bureau of Prohibition & Customs, & the Department of Justice. It's estimated she cracked 12,000 encrypted messages by hand in 3 years. Elizebeth's work resulted in 650 criminal prosecutions (including indicting Al Capone) & she testified as an expert witness in 33 cases against alcohol & drug smugglers. The Canadian government sought Elisebeth's help in 1937 with an opium-smuggling gang, & she eventually testified in the trial of several Chinese. Her cracking a complicated, unknown Chinese code, in spite of not knowing the language, was key to the convictions. She also identified a Manhattan antique doll expert as a Japanese spy, & helped resolve a diplomatic feud with Canada because of her code breaking skills.

While Friedman ran her own code-breaking unit in the '20s & '30s for the Coast Guard, she felt frustrated by her position during WW2 because she didn't have the kind of control she was used to. She was transferred to Navy control, which didn't allow civilians to be in charge. She was told to monitor secret communications between German spies in South America & their controllers in Berlin. Elisebeth & her team remained the primary US code-breakers assigned to this & solved numerous cipher systems used by them. She was even able to decrypt messages that had been sent using the infamous German Enigma machines. She did this using pen & paper, unlike the codebreakers in Bletchley Park, England, who were using early computers to do the same. By December 1942, she & her team had cracked 3 separate Enigma machines & every one of the Nazi's new codes, uncovering an entire spy network across South America, & discovering the identity, codename, & codes of its ringmaster. She successfully tracked him where every other law enforcement & intelligence agency had failed. After the spy ring was crushed, Argentina, Bolivia, & Chile broke with Germany, eliminating the threat that the western hemisphere would fall. Although the FBI turned to Friedman for her help, she didn't receive any credit for her work. They

essentially erased her contribution & J. Edgar Hoover took full credit, never mentioning Elisebeth publically. One historian writes this of Hoover ignoring her contribution: *It was a lie, but it was a lie that worked, & it was the lie that ended up getting written into the history books.* Friedman signed a Navy oath promising her silence until her death, which was in 1980, & she stayed true to it for all those decades.

Though both William & Elizebeth worked for the US government doing the same type of work, she earned half of what William did. While they both broke codes, they did it for different agencies & couldn't discuss with each other what they did. He was well-known & she was unknown. Tellingly, a 1956 profile of William in TIME Magazine listed his *lofty honors* & awards for his contributions to break the cipher of the Japanese *PURPLE* machine, & referred to Elizebeth as an *assistant cipher clerk*. After retirement from government service, Friedman & her husband co-wrote a book, *The Cryptologist Looks at Shakespeare*, eventually published as *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined*. It won several awards & debunked Baconian conspiracy nuts with proficiency & finesse. Of course, included in the text of their book, they included a code that, when deciphered, read: *I did not write the plays. F. Bacon.*

Elisebeth never talked about her years as a code & cipher breaker. Time, & the efforts of some who didn't want it known that a woman was breaking codes for the FBI, Coast Guard, Army, & Navy, erased her from history. She took her work & story to the grave. After some 50 years in code breaking & code making, including time providing security via encryption at the International Monetary Fund, she retired relatively unknown. In 2008, 28 years after her death, documents about her work were finally declassified. She was a hero & never got her due while living. She was an unknown legend in her own time. For over 60 years, the official history of Elizebeth's work was buried deep in government archives, with every page stamped TOP SECRET ULTRA, the code name for Enigma. A woman who accomplished astounding things but wasn't recognized publically for any of it until long after her death. Several books have now been written about her & she's getting the recognition she deserved.

Maybe, as a Christian, you feel the same way. Unappreciated, unnoticed, & forgotten in your service for Christ. Face it; sometimes it's tough to serve God in the shadows. You show up faithfully. You serve, contribute, & sacrifice for others & no one seems to notice & nothing seems to come from it. We've all been there. It's easy to be impressed by, dare I say *jealous of*, the giants of the Christian faith who are recognized for what they've done. We read in the Bible of people like Moses who stood before Pharaoh & freed the Jews, of Elijah who stood up to evil kings, & of Paul who testified before rulers & hostile Jewish governments. We know of people like Martin Luther & Billy Graham who did great things for God. We're glad that God has used these people. Their stories are memorable & they're well known & recognized for what they've done. But we're not like them. We're not famous or recognized & that's OK. We must remember that the vast majority of God's work has been done through ordinary Christians, people, who in the eyes of the world, are no-one special. Think others we read of in the Bible. The course of history was changed by people like a servant girl in the household of Naaman (2 Kgs 5). A landowner named Boaz showed kindness to a foreign immigrant which led to the family line of Jesus. Many unnamed people in Acts hosted church in their homes & we could go on & on. Not all the people whom God chooses to use are remarkable. Most are ordinary. With that as introduction, let me ask you, who replaced Judas as an apostle? Matthias. Who was he? What did he do? [Acts 1:12-26](#)

This is the last time the apostles as a named list is found in Scripture.

Jesus has just ascended & the disciples return to Jerusalem to wait, as they'd been told to do. While waiting they're **continually devoting themselves to prayer** (14). That's not a bad way to spend your time. As they were doing this, Peter stood among the 120 or so that were gathered & said, **the Scripture must be fulfilled** (16). What Scriptures? Ps 69:25 predicting that Judas' place would be vacated & then Ps 109:8 that someone would take his place. Peter sees the detailed fulfillment of the OT & we see how well he knew the OT. God's plan was to have 12 apostles to be the foundation of the church through their preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though Judas fell away, God's plan wasn't thwarted. Peter & the other apostles knew the OT. In their time with the resurrected Jesus, He'd explained many things to them. Peter knew that Judas' betrayal had been

foretold & included the instruction, **let another man take his office** (Acts 1:20). Peter begins the process by listing the requirements for Judas' replacement. He must **have accompanied** the apostles **all the time that the Lord Jesus went in & out among** them, **beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from** them (Acts 1:1:21-22). He had to have witnessed Jesus' entire earthly ministry, from its inception at His baptism to its culmination at His ascension. The 2nd requirement was that the one selected had to be **a witness with** the other 11 **of Jesus' resurrection** (22). He must have seen the resurrected Christ. All the apostles were to be personal eyewitnesses of the risen Lord. At least **two men** met those requirements: **Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), & Matthias** (23). Nothing is known of either man; they appear nowhere else in Scripture. The details of their faithfulness are hidden from us. Yet Peter & the others were familiar with them & their faithful discipleship made them stand out as worthy candidates to **become a witness with** the apostles **of Jesus' resurrection**. Both were men of equal character & met the criteria. Think of it: Ever since John the Baptist had prepared the way for the Messiah, Matthias had followed. He had followed Jesus from the Jordan River to the rugged hills of Galilee. He saw the dove come down from heaven & heard the Father speak. He witnessed Jesus healing sick people, feeding thousands, raising the dead, & heard Him teach. He was there from the beginning. Early on, Jesus chose His 12 apostles from among those who followed Him. Even though Matthias qualified as much as any of the 12 who made the list, he wasn't selected. He followed anyway. He listened with amazement to the SOTM that day beside the Sea of Galilee. He ate his fill of fish & loaves on the Plain of Bethsaida. He witnessed the miraculous healings in Capernaum & Chorazin. He could very well have been one of the 70 sent out by Jesus (Lk 10). He lent his voice to the throng that praised Jesus as He rode the donkey down the Mount of Olives. One week later, Matthias' world turned upside down, as the One he'd faithfully followed died on a Roman cross just outside of Jerusalem. 3 days later, however, Matthias' hopes rose as Jesus showed Himself, resurrected from the grave. For more than 3 years, Matthias had witnessed it all in absolute obscurity. He's never mentioned in the gospels, yet he was an eyewitness to everything. He was a disciple with passion & persuasion, but without recognition. He was simply a face in the crowd &

was a willing unknown. In moments like this we might beg God to rescue us from our insignificant lives, believing nothing important is happening with us. Matthias reminds us that just the opposite is true. After Jesus' ascension, Matthias had gathered with the apostles & many other disciples of Jesus in an upstairs room large enough for the whole group of 120. Only a few weeks earlier, Jesus had reclined, possibly in this very room, at the table with His 12 disciples. But then the evening fell dark & their sorrow deepened as Jesus predicted their imminent failures. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him, & others deserted Him. Jesus' resurrection had given the disillusioned group of disciples a new hope & a new purpose. As He ascended to heaven, Jesus told His followers, **You shall be My witnesses** (Acts 1:8). Matthias heard it. He was there & saw Jesus ascend. There, probably in the same room where Jesus had predicted Judas's betrayal, Peter now explained, through the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Scripture's prediction that Judas would need to be replaced (Acts 1:20). Following a discussion, 2 men who were qualified arose to the top of the list: one named *Joseph, Barsabbas, Justus* & the other, *Matthias*.

Knowing that the 3rd qualification for an apostle was to be chosen by the Lord, those gathered prayed & said, **"You, Lord, who now the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen to occupy this ministry & apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place"** (24-25). The group prayed, cast lots, & God chose Matthias to serve in Judas's place as an apostle & as a witness of Jesus's resurrection. Most likely, no one was more surprised than Matthias. He never followed Jesus in order to serve as an apostle. He didn't stick around to fill the vacancy, he didn't campaign for the job. He simply followed Jesus from the very beginning, with no motive but love & faithfulness. Notice that Joseph didn't get upset, call for another lot to be cast, or walk out & join another religion. I'm convinced he stayed with the disciples & continued on in the Lord's work. We don't know why God chose Matthias, but it should be enough to know that if God did the choosing, He made the right choice. By the way, this is the last time in Scripture we see God working through the casting of lots. From here onward, as God's people are indwelt by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, God reveals His will through His Word & the leading of the Holy Spirit.

My point is this: Repeatedly in Scripture we see individuals who began with obscure faithfulness, people like Ruth, Gideon, Esther, & Matthias, & then God expanded their influence for His glory. In each case, God alone gave the promotion. It's the same with us. When we want God to rescue us from our insignificant lives, believing nothing important is happening with us, Matthias reminds us that just the opposite is true. Matthias became the 12th apostle. & yet he never appears by name again in the book of Acts or anywhere else in Scripture. He emerges for a moment & then vanishes into obscurity, a willing unknown who followed God faithfully.

Elisebeth Smith Friedman, Matthias, Joseph called Barsabbas, & many others (Andrew, Thomas, Bartholomew/Nathanael, Simon, etc.) all served in the background, faithfully doing their job. Matthias didn't do it for the recognition, fame, bragging rights, or to be noticed by others. For whatever reason, he remains completely in the background. While we don't know anything about him other than what we read here, we know he was significant to God & God's plan. We do know he was active with the other disciples as we read, **Peter, taking his stand with the eleven...** (Acts 2:14). **The twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples...** (Acts 6:2). Matthias was one of those. Eph 2:19 tells us the church was **built on the foundation of who? The apostles & prophets.** Matthias is one of these church pillars, even though we don't know anything of him. From church history we get conflicting stories of where he preached & what he did. In Christian art he's often pictured with an axe, meaning the early Christians believed he was put to death by beheading. Greek tradition states he went to Cappadocia in central Turkey & preached the gospel there. Later he went to an area by the Caspian Sea where, it is said, he was killed by crucifixion or by being chopped apart. A marker placed in the ruins of a Roman fortress in modern Georgia, at the intersection of Eastern Europe & Western Asia, claims that Matthias is buried at that site. One tradition says that, *Matthias preached the Gospel to barbarians & meat-eaters in the interior of Ethiopia, in the city of the cannibals, where the sea harbor of Hyssus is, at the mouth of the river Phasis. He died at Sebastopolis, & was buried there, near the Temple of the Sun.*³ Alternatively, another tradition maintains that Matthias was stoned in Jerusalem & then beheaded. Matthias, one

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthias_the_Apostle

of the 12 apostles, but no one knows what he did. The qualifications to replace Judas weren't based on talent, knowledge, or ability. The qualifications were faithfulness, loyalty, & consistency. Mathias was faithful. We don't read about any sermon he ever preached, miracles he performed, people who were saved under his ministry, or anything at all of what he did. God chose Mathias on the basis of Mathias' faithfulness. What does this mean for us? The Bible is full of God using seemingly insignificant people who aren't recognized by others. Maybe that's how you feel. Perhaps others have written you off or you see yourself as insignificant. Maybe they've taken credit for what you've done. Take heart in knowing that God has chosen you, gifted you, & wants to use you. The Psalmist tells us to **serve the Lord with gladness** (100:2). God doesn't actually need our help, but in His grace He allows us the privilege of participating in what He's doing here on earth. We serve Him by faithfully using the gifts & abilities He's given us in order to advance His kingdom by ministering to the needs of others for His glory. He wants us to serve Him, which involves serving others. & He promises to make it worthwhile for us to do that. He promises eternal rewards for faithful & sacrificial service.

Maybe you know the story of the older missionaries, Mr. & Mrs. Henry Morrison. The Morrises were returning to New York City to retire after 40 years of service in Africa. They had no pension as there weren't retirement programs for missionaries in those days. Their health was broken, & they were defeated, discouraged, & afraid. On the way back to United States, he began to wonder, *Will anyone remember us? Will anyone recall who we are? Will anyone meet us at the boat?* Unknown to them at 1st, Teddy Roosevelt was also on board the ship. He had gone to Africa for a hunting trip

Everyone on board tried to get a glimpse of the famous president, but no one paid any attention to them. *Something is wrong*, Henry said to his wife. *Why should we have given our lives in faithful service for God in Africa all these years & have no one care a thing about us? This man comes back from killing animals in Africa & everyone makes much over him.*

When the ship docked in New York, thousands of people were there cheering. Bands were playing. There were signs, banners, & billboards saying, *Welcome Home*. But no one noticed the missionary couple. They slipped off the ship & found a cheap flat on the East Side, hoping the next day to see what they could do to make a living in the city. That night the man's spirit broke. He said to his wife, *I can't take this; God is not treating us fairly.* & as an encouraging spouse, she replied, *Why don't you go into the bedroom & tell that to Him.* A short time later he came out with a transformed look of contentment on his face. His wife asked, *What happened?*

The Lord settled it with me, he answered. *I told Him how bitter I was that the President should receive this tremendous homecoming, when no one met us as we returned home. & when I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put His hand on my shoulder & said, 'Henry, you're not home yet!'*

Some people are recognized for their greatness in this life, while God honors others in the life to come. We have the promise of eternal reward for faithful service when we get home to heaven. Do you ever feel like the things you do for Christ are overlooked? Maybe you spend long hours working with children each day or you work a mundane office job. Never forget that this world is not your home. Serve your Savior faithfully & He'll reward you for your labors. Just keep in mind, you're not home yet. Use the gifts God has given you, & do the job that needs to be done, & leave the recognition with Him. He'll be fair & you'll come out far better that way. The principle of rewards for service is simply this: It's to our eternal benefit to trust God to do what is fair & to leave the matter in His hands. We aren't going to be rewarded for who we are or what position we held. Rewards are for how faithfully we serve God with what He's given us. This is a wonderful truth for all ordinary people in Christ's kingdom. I'm convinced it isn't going to be the one who stands behind the pulpit who gets the most honor in the kingdom. It's far more likely to be the lady who is down on her hands & knees cleaning up some mess in the nursery that a baby made because she cares for that child & its parents. Nobody will ever know what she did, but she's going to have a reward. We've got many servants in this church who are going to have great honor later. Like those who serve in the nursery, SS, & primary church. Those who pray for us all & those who do all the little things that need to be done. Those who give sacrificially of their time to repair, remodel, paint, water, weed, cook, set up, tear down, transport people, visit shut-ins, & keep things running behind the scenes. Those who quietly witness to those around them. Jesus won't overlook the tiniest or least significant act of service when we stand before Him. Don't forget Heb 6:10. **God is not unjust so as to forget your work & the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered & in still ministering to the saints.** God isn't going to forget your work. You can count on it. Are you willing to believe it? We can impress everyone on earth with our success & our achievements & it will make no difference in eternity. Impressing one Person is all that counts when it comes to receiving eternal rewards: our Lord Jesus Christ. & He's impressed when we cultivate a servant's spirit. If you want to be great in God's kingdom, you'll have to be the servant of all. Most of you here this morning are Christians. You've made that decision. Can I ask you if you're faithfully

serving the Lord? Or have you hidden your talents, gifts, abilities, & resources? Under-utilized them? Just too busy to use them? Would you make the commitment right now? *Yes, Lord, I want to be available to You to do whatever it is You call me to do.* He may call you to do things no one else may notice, but God won't overlook that. He'll reward you at the right time. One day everything will be made right.

What about Matthias? What do we know about him in the future? 3 Scriptures. Mt 19:27-30 says,

Peter said to Jesus, "Behold, we have left everything & followed You; what then will there be for us?" & Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. & everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, & will inherit eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last; & *the* last, first.

Matthias is one of those 12 sitting on a throne ruling the 12 tribes of Israel. Again, after the last Passover the day before Jesus died, He told His disciples after they squabbled over who was the greatest, **You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; & just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat & drink at My table in My kingdom, & you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel** (Lk 22:28-30). That includes Matthias. John, writing of the New Jerusalem, tells us, **the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, & on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb** (Rev 21:14). Picture this: The angels are working on the eternal city. They're setting the foundation stones, Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. They get to the 12th foundation stone. What name should be on it? Matthias. Why? Because he was faithful. Ask God to make you as faithful as He did Matthias so that one day you too might hear, **Well done, good & faithful slave** (Mt 25:21). Paul tells us what we're to be doing to hear that. **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord** (1 Cor 15:58). Every good work we do in this life has eternal benefits the Lord Himself guarantees. **Behold, I am coming quickly, Jesus says, & My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done** (Rev 22:12). We have God's own promise that our work for Him **is not in vain**. He knows of it, it's not insignificant, He will recognize it, & He will reward it. You can count on it.

¹ Before we go any further, some have argued that Peter & the apostles were wrong to choose a replacement for Judas. Paul, they assume, was God's choice as the 12th apostle. However, nothing in this passage indicates their action was wrong. To me, it's inconceivable that Jesus would allow such a crucial error in such an important office at the very beginning of His church. Why would He take pains to provide the apostles with all the proper resources & then allow them to choose the wrong man? Jesus chose Matthias just as surely as He chose the other 11. & while Paul was in no way inferior to the 12, he wasn't one of the 12. By his own testimony he was **in no respect ... inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody** (2 Cor 12:11). He was a unique apostle. The mission of the 12 was primarily to the nation of Israel, while he was the apostle sent to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13).