

September 10, 2017

“Grateful for What Older Adults Shared with Us”

2 Timothy 1:3-9a, Mark 10:13-16

Today we celebrate and give thanks to God for older adults for who they are and their contribution to our lives, to faith communities and to our society. For thanks to them, we are who we are today and we live in the society they have built.

We are grateful for their wisdom and the faith they have passed on to us, as well as for the nurture, care and love we have received from them. Yes, there are some older adults who may not be so commendable, but I would like to give credit to them for living their lives, which may have been challenging, to say the least.

In today’s First Lesson, the Apostle Paul writes to his young disciple, Timothy, that the genuine faith he finds in Timothy lived first in his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. The faith of his grandmother was shared and passed on to Timothy. It shows the power and influence grandparents can make in the lives of their grandchildren.

You know I like the Upper Room Devotional. One of the reasons why I like it is that all the daily devotions were written by ordinary and extra ordinary people like you and me.

A story of a grandson touched my heart. Let me share it with you.

Ten years ago I came home from work one evening to find my home empty of all my possessions. My wife had left me, and I felt empty. I began to question all my relationships, even my relationship with God.

After my divorce was finalized, I relocated to the opposite side of the country. Once there, I never lived in one place for long and never kept a job for more than a year. I closed myself off from friends, family, even God.

But no matter where I went or how much I avoided contact with people, my grandmother made sure I continued to receive copies of The Upper Room. And though I wasn’t sure why, I continued to read the meditations, Bible passages, and prayers. Maybe a small part of me still wanted to believe that while people may be deceitful, God’s love indeed is honest.

Today, I have not completely moved on from my suspicions of relationships with other people, and I have not found all the answers to my questions about love and loss. But I have learned that while time might not heal all wounds, God does. I have learned to find joy in prayer. I'm beginning to think that continued faith in God's love is the answer.

If you are grandparents or older adults, we can pass on to the younger generation the greatest gift and the supreme value in life, which is love. We can share our faith in God, who loves our loved ones even more than we can and who gave us the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ, who invited children to come to him. "Let the children come to me. Do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs."

Older adults have much to offer to our families, faith communities and to our society. Another devotional I would like to share with you was written by an older adult.

A hymn titled "The Old Rugged Cross" has this line in its chorus: "I'll cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down." It is about the Christian hope of heaven, where we will lay aside our earthly trophies and receive a heavenly crown.

In my mid-eighties, I find myself grieving the "trophies" of life that I have given up since I retired. As a retired pastor, I seldom preach anymore. I also can no longer engage in recreational activities that I once enjoyed, such as volleyball, swimming, and leading canoe trips in the wilderness. For over 60 years one of my prized "trophies" was my pilot's license that enabled me to experience the joy of flight in a single-engine aircraft.

As I have meditated on the meaning of "clinging to the old rugged cross," I have realized more clearly that I have no need to give up God's great redeeming love that comes to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. My bodily aches and limitations do not hinder my participation in a life of faith. I give thanks for all that the cross of Christ means, and I commend that story of God's grace and goodness to all as the real transforming crown of this life and the life to come.

The "Thought for the Day" was "My greatest trophy is God's sustaining love." Church, faith and God have meant more to the older generations than they have to our younger generations. Older adults have much to share of God's goodness and grace with our younger generations.

The book of Proverbs 20:29 says,

“The glory of young people is their energy; the beauty of elders is their gray hair.”

About gray hair, the book of Proverbs 16:31 says,

“Gray hairs are crowns of glory, gained through an honest life.”

The book of Job 12:12 says,

“Wisdom comes with aging, and understanding with length of days.”

May God bless grandparents and older adults who have given so much to our families, to our faith communities and to our society.

May God bless them with the greatest trophy, which is God’s sustaining love. Amen.