

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

1 Timothy 1:2 ...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

My sermon today is based on our Gospel lesson – Luke 12:13-21

“Old Age or Faithful Sage”

Introduction

We live in an aging society. Most people are aware of this fact. In most developing countries, only about **7** percent of the population is over the age of 65. In the US, Canada and Europe, roughly **20** percent of the population is over 65. This increase in lifespan affects the Church, just as it affects the rest of society. So today I would like to talk a little about what the Bible teaches about retirement.

Is Retirement Wrong?

The first text that I would like you to look at this morning is our Gospel lesson. This lesson is usually called, “The Parable of the Rich Fool.” A man sets aside his wealth with the goal of being able to retire and spend his money on his own pleasure. God surprises him by telling him he is a fool and striking him dead.

We see a similar idea addressed to widows in...

1 Timothy 5:6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

If we are setting aside money in hopes of living a life centered on pleasure, God tells us that we are spiritually dead.

On the other hand, *these verses do not forbid people from retiring*. They simply say that retirement should not be spent in a self-indulgent way. Retirement is acceptable and even necessary under certain circumstances but retirement should not be an excuse for gluttony and laziness. It should be a time to serve in a different way, not to stop serving all together.

Retirement in Numbers

Here is a little bit of trivia for you. Did you know that there was a retirement age for the priests in the Old Testament? You do if you read the Bible verses in your green flyer.

Numbers 8:24-26

"24 This applies to the Levites (priests): Men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the Tent of Meeting, 25 but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer. 26 They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the Tent of Meeting, but they themselves must not do the work. This, then, is how you are to assign the responsibilities of the Levites."

At fifty, it's time to hang it up. Of course, we have to consider that the average lifespan at that time was short, probably 30-some years. Also the priests worked performing sacrifices so this job could be a little like being butcher. You might want some young, strong guy cutting the meat.

Yet even after this mandatory retirement at age fifty, there is the assumption that the priest will want to assist the younger priests. His role changes but he still has a supporting role in worship.

Simeon and Anna

There are a couple of other retirees in the Bible that are worth looking at. Simeon and Anna were both elderly when Jesus was born. The Bible says Anna was 84 years old. We don't know how old Simeon was. Yet they were both in the Temple every day worshiping, fasting and praying.

They were among the first people to recognize Jesus as our Savior. Simeon prophesied about Jesus' ministry and gave us the words of the Nunc Dimitis – a song that Christians around the world still sing. We don't know much about what Simeon and Anna did in their youth but we remember them for what they did in the last years of their lives. That's not a bad legacy for anyone, regardless of their age.

Pray for Your Children and Grandchildren

There are some things that retired people can do better than working people. They can spend more time in prayer, fasting and worship. Retired people should pray for their church, their nation and their family.

“Christian psychologist James Dobson, in his book, Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives, speaks of his great-grandfather who in his older years spent one hour a day just before lunch praying for his descendants, those presently living as well as those not even on the scene yet. One day he announced to his family that God informed him that all of his descendants to the fourth generation would become Christians. James Dobson was of that fourth generation and indeed all before him had not only become Christians but had also been ministers or married ministers. James Dobson was the first one to not enter the ministry.”

I can't say with certainty that God spoke directly to James Dobson's great-grandfather but I do believe that the prayers you say for your children and grandchildren are heard by God. I believe that my grandmother's prayers for me were influential on my going into the ministry even though I didn't know about them until after I went to seminary that she prayed for me to enter the ministry.

Set A Good Example

Another thing that Scripture teaches that retirees should do is set a good example for young people. Grandparents can often set a tone for their family. They remember the family traditions and make sure their grandchildren understand how important they are. They are the standard against which the younger generation measures itself (even if your grandchildren won't admit it).

As Paul wrote to new Pastor Titus:

Titus 2:2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. 3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

Conclusion

In summary, it is not wrong to retire but retirement should not be an excuse to be self-centeredness. It is a time to serve in ways that were not possible during the working years. Let's conclude with a prayer from the Psalms.

KJV Psalm 71:18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Amen.

May that peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.