

**FATHER'S DAY, RECOGNITION SUNDAY, YOUTH SUNDAY**  
**JUNE 15, 2014**

Last week after our morning service, we honored our confirmands whom we hope will someday assume the mantle of servant-leadership, and this morning we honor two men who long wore that mantle, ministering to Christ through the ministry of his church as servant-leaders, to whom we have awarded the distinction of Emeritus status. This morning we honor our children who possess such energy and curiosity – and fathers who drink a pot of coffee to keep pace and try to field one “why” after another.

As I was thinking about this morning's service, I realized that we are honoring our young and old. People often talk about the generation gap, they lament this great chasm that divides the greatest generation from the latest generation. One generation actually talked on their phones, while another generation texts and plays games and does math and almost anything but talk on their phone. One generation had three television stations and rabbit ears, another generation has 300 television stations and a satellite dish. One generation paid only 17 cents for a Big Mac and 80 cents for a gallon of gas and we get stuck with inflation! We've heard it before: the young complain about the old being without-a-clue, behind-the-times fogey's and the old complain about the young being disrespectful yahoos. But our service this morning can serve as a reminder that while some of us think 39 is old, and some of us are proud imitators of Jack Benny and will be turning 39 again for the 40th time – we are all brothers and sisters in the same, one family of God. And thinking about that, in this season of Pentecost, I remembered what the apostle Peter preached 2,000 years ago when God poured out his Holy Spirit: “In those last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.” (**Acts 2:17-18**) Your **young** men will see visions, your **old** men will dream dreams. Whether a believer for 80 years or a believer for 80 seconds, we all have received the same Holy Spirit who is with us and in us forever: take that generation gap.

One important facet in the relationship between generations is that of teacher and learner. It's true that sometimes younger people teach older people things like how to DVR their favorite shows and read text messages; but in Psalm 78 we're looking at older people teaching younger people some important things. So, teach and learn. Let's start with...

**A. Teach.** The Psalmist writes in verses 2-4: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old – what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children.” To paraphrase he says, “My generation is going to talk about the things we learned from previous generations.” What things?

1. **God's Deeds** – and notice how they are described: praiseworthy (they should elicit our praise to God), power (they manifest God's omnipotence), and wonders (they make us awe-struck and slack-jawed in God's presence).

I've told you this before, but both my parents were very involved in my spiritual formation; and one thing I remember my dad doing was illustrating Bible stories...with stick figures. Just picture a stick figure Daniel in the Lions' den. That's one way of telling a younger generation about what God has done.

We read, "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done." In other words, we're going to tell them about how God is the Almighty maker of heaven and earth, how he redeemed his covenant people Israel and wrought signs and wonders through his servant Moses – the ten terrible plagues that demonstrated his awesome power that neither Pharaoh nor any impotent idol he served could rival; how he sent fire from heaven to consume Elijah's soaked sacrifice, how he shut the mouths of the lions preserving Daniel alive in their den, how in the person of his eternal and only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he walked on water and multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed multitudes, and raised the dead at the command of his mouth, and on and on and on. Those of us who are older ought to tell those who are younger about God's deeds so that they will be filled with awe and the praises of God.

## 2. **Decrees**

A Sunday school teacher asked her class, "Which of the ten commandments tells us how to treat our parents?" One little kid's hand shot up, and she answered, "Honor thy father and thy mother." "Very good!" the teacher replied, "how about a commandment that tells us how to treat our brothers and sisters?" The same little kid yelled out "Thou shalt not kill."

I'll be honest...I had trouble with both of them and some others growing up. I remember back-talking to my mother once, and using the Lord's name in vain on another occasion: and thanks to my father's swift discipline, I don't recall ever doing either again. And I mean that: I am grateful for my father's discipline.

My father's discipline was only one way he taught me God's decrees. The Psalmist says he will talk about God's deeds, and then he says he will talk about God's decrees. "He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children..." (**Psalm 78:5**) We see a picture of that in Deuteronomy: "Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night." (**Deuteronomy 6:6-7**)

Now, one quick word of exhortation: the former generation needs to teach the next generation God's decrees; for what's the alternative? If we are slack to teach God's laws, the devil and the world are more than happy to plug the gap, and teach children their rules of moral relativism, materialism, and secularism; everyday children are bombarded with messages that tell them they are number 1 rather than God – if he's even there, that it's okay to bandy about his name like a curse word, that it's okay to disrespect Mom and Dad – after all, they're old and don't understand' that it's okay to steal as long as you don't get caught, and on and on and on. We need to teach God's decrees.

So that's teach; now briefly...

2. **Learn.** Once we were on family vacation to Gettysburg; and the first night there, there was a terrible thunderstorm; so rather than staying in our little campground cabin, we drove into town and went into Perkins; and for anyone interested in trivia about your pastor, I had a slice of my second-favorite pie: pecan. I don't remember what precipitated my father's next comment, but it is the stuff of family legend and oft repeated wisdom. We got him a little flustered, so he said to me, "You, it gets to here (**ear**), but it gets to here (**mouth**) too fast," and then to my brother, "You...it gets to here (**point to ear**) but it doesn't get to here (**point to brain**) so you say "Huh?" For anyone in an older generation, do you ever feel like that when trying to teach an important lesson to a younger person: you feel like it gets to here, but it doesn't get to here, so they say "huh?" It's like Bill Cosby's bit where he tells his son not to drink his soda, and two seconds later his son is drinking his soda. Still, we need to persevere in teaching, because even if we give up, the world won't; and us young people – may I suggest we need to get a little better at listening and learning?

We read, "He decreed statutes for Jacob and established his law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, (**that's teaching; and now for the learning**) so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, (**and then, repeating the process**) and they in turn would tell their children." (**Psalm 78:5-6**)

Young people: we need to be willing to listen to what our older brothers and sisters in Christ tell us, we need to learn about God's deeds and decrees that they try to teach us about, both for our own good and so that we can in turn tell another generation, so that we can in turn teach our children.

In closing, why do we need to teach and learn? We can offer many reasons, here the Psalmist gives a couple:

1. So Younger People Will Trust God - "Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds..."
2. So Younger People Will Obey God - "...and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands."
3. And if we put reasons 1 & 2 together, So Younger People will not repeat the past - "They would not be like their forefathers – a rebellious and stubborn generation whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him." And the rest of the Psalm unpacks that if you want to read it when you have time.

Psalm 78