

Sermon - Second Lent - Genesis (17:1-7;15-16)

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you...”

Ninety-Nine years old! That’s probably older than any of us here this morning, and God was setting up a whole new life with a future full of activity and promise? Abram is ninety-nine years old and God is giving him and Sarai a new lease on life! It’s no wonder Abram fell to the ground on his face -

This past week I was talking with a friend. We’ve been reading a book together and discussing it each week. I spoke to her last week about feeling old and weak and tired. I shared with her that my life of ministry within the church and our community seems to be dwindling down and perhaps needs the energy and insight of a younger person. Now my friend is not more than a year or so younger than I and she began to laugh at my ramblings. I’m going to share with you what my friend said to me as I lamented getting tired and old and feeling unappreciated - and I quote: “Oh, for pity sake just Get over it,” she said, “I’m not going to sit around waiting for someone to write my obituary! I’ve got stuff to do and so do you!” I took her off my automatic call list.....but what she said was true and in truth I’m lucky to have her as an “inspirational” friend.

Although It’s nice to be able to sit back and enjoy the rewards of a life well lived, sometimes we get to feeling sorry for ourselves, feeling that maybe other people think we older folk aren't good for much anymore. So, this morning, I especially want to direct this sermon to those of you here who are “of a certain age.” Don’t you just love that phrase? From what I’ve heard, that phrase: “of a certain age” means those of us ready to add afternoon naps, prune juice and senior citizen discounts to our daily routines! Truthfully, our country *is* aging and our congregation reflects that. Most (but not all of us) at Calvary are in our 50’s or older. We’ve experienced many of life’s great joys and most if not all of us, have lived through some great sorrows as well. I believe, like Abraham in our OT reading today, all the things we have lived through have endowed us with some particular wisdom that our young brothers and sisters have yet to acquire.

So, there was Abram walking along with God and I imagine him chatting about life and what getting old feels like, when God drops this bombshell on him - “You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations...and Sarai, your wife shall have a son and give rise to *nations*, and kings shall come from her.” Remembering that Abram and Sarai were older by a LOT than you or I, can you just see the look on Abram’s face when God told him that he would be exceedingly fruitful? - somewhere between astonishment, hilarity...and fear.

Can’t you just hear Abraham (that’s what God changed his name to as they were chatting) can’t you just hear him when he comes in his front door at home and calls out: “Sarah, get up from your nap and come here. God and I went for a stroll together today and honey, you’re not going to believe this!” Now Sarah was still a little groggy from her afternoon nap and was probably wondering if she had rightly heard what Abraham had told her. Surely not, or maybe Abraham has had a terrible nightmare during his nap, or maybe a stroke.

But no, it was not a nightmare. *It was God’s powerful Word enfleshed in each of them.* God’s powerful Word was the beginning of something *new and life changing* for that dear couple and for generations to come. Their chronological Age of 99 years made no difference whatsoever to God, for God had a plan. And when God makes a plan - look out, cause whatever it is, is gonna *happen*, regardless of how old we are! So the next time, like me or Abram, you’re feeling useless or tired, turn to that powerful God who already has a plan for you to do the next right thing!

Take a minute to look around you right now - see the sweet friends and family members here with us today and remember those of our Calvary folk who are still shut in and isolated at home. Remember the neighbors and friends who may be needing a kind word of encouragement from you.

As the poet Rumi wrote "Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground." There are hundreds of ways to kneel in servant ministry, showing the Love of Christ in the world - ask God to show you how and where you might serve. And don't forget to ask God to give you the energy you need to fulfill the ministry. Then stand back and watch God work!

We older folk have some pretty good wisdom which could be helpful to others - I'm thinking of things like visiting shut-ins, writing notes, making phone calls, teaching English as a second language, mentoring a child in math (well *that* wouldn't work so well for me or my student!), serving on the altar guild or flower guild, making a daily Prayer list for those who need your prayers and praying for them everyday, reading to a nursing home resident, picking up a few groceries for a neighbor. There are so many needs out there and we are just old enough to take our ministry responsibility seriously.

Finally, lets remember that there was a caveat to all those promises that God made to Abraham - *just one* - he had to be blameless. But, at 99 years old, what sort of trouble could he *possibly* get into?

Go make some Holy Trouble dear ones!