

National Youth Sunday 2017

Generations Celebrating Faith (Psalm 145:4 & Acts 2:42-47)

Sermon reflection by Mark Myers

Theme:

Our theme this year speaks of learning from the generations that have gone before us. By nature, it is often difficult for teens who lack the experience, and world view of older persons, but these are the people who teach us to be who we are, and how to praise, and obey God.

Guidelines for Meditation -

If anyone has paid any attention to the news lately, the New Testament scripture selected for the National Youth Sunday should strike home. Wars in Syria, conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Civil War in Somalia, threats of conflicts with Russia, and with North Korea. Conflict for young people strikes closer to home. We hear of people fighting with police, bullies causing problems in schools, racism, sexism, more “isms” than you can count.

((Insert a general story of a conflict at your local High School, town or city))

As youth, we are also often at conflict with our friends, families, parents and grandparents. We deal with cliques in school that are in conflict with each other. At home, teens always think that they know best, and older generations just don't understand what teens today are going through. We fight with parents, with teachers, with siblings.

((If you have one, insert brief story example of personal conflict here - one of our advisors has remarked that he is amazed at how smart his parents got ---- once he reached his 20's))

In our old testament reading for today, Psalm 145 verse 4, we hear “One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.” This Psalm is credited to King David – and David spends most of Psalm 145 celebrating the great deeds of God. If you read on from verse 4, David says “They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will mediate on your wonderful works.... And it goes on through the next 15 verses to celebrate God, what God provides for us, and how we should celebrate. It's verse 4 though, that we are concentrating on today. “one generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.”

The Church of the Brethren is well known for playing the “Name Game” at conferences and gatherings. Who do you know? Who are you related to? How might I know who you are? *(Give an example if you have one)* We are tight knit. Our parents, and grandparents are our Sunday School teachers, and our church leaders. (Mention a Sunday School teacher here for an example) It is our older generations who are commending Gods work to us, and teaching us about how we should act and how we should treat others. The previous generations are telling us how to “do church” by their words and by their actions.

And that's a challenge for the previous generations. Young people today can tell if someone is being fake a mile away. We know if the older generations are "saying – but not doing." We watch those older than us for examples of how to act, what to do, and what to say. You may not know it -- and we may not know it, or want to admit it -- but those same kids and teens who are arguing you, are soaking up every step, or mis-step, you take. King David's challenge in the Psalm is "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts."

Our New Testament reading for today is from Acts 2. There is a similar thing happening here. Most of Acts deals with the founding of the Christian Church, and details the works of Peter, John and Paul as they spread the church beyond the Jewish community. In telling how the early church is reaching out and growing, the writer – Luke – is explaining ways that we should be acting. He is telling future generations how Peter, John and Paul spread the early church.

And they did it through teaching and fellowship, through breaking bread and prayer. They did it through families of believers. In a most "Church of the Brethren" way, they did it through supporting and giving to the poor, providing service to others, and taking meals together and praising God. When we think about our generations who went before us, isn't this exactly what the older generations do for us? Isn't this almost the very definition of family?

In the Church of the Brethren, we believe in "Faith with works." We take this example of the early church to heart. The generations before us have shown us to be involved in disaster relief. Following their example, we use our property and possessions to give to people in need.

We're not a heavily evangelistic church but previous generations have taught us to do good work in the community and to be non-confrontational about witnessing to others. They've taught us to emphasize peace, simplify, humility Because of this example, our youth are giving up a week of their summer to do disaster relief work – as the generations before us have done, and continue to do now.

((Insert a story of working with an older person and their example))

And what can be more historically Brethren than "They broke bread in their homes, and ate together with glad and sincere hearts"

As we work through Acts, we find that God isn't interested in laws and regulations, but how we are now united through faith... we find that God can do amazing things through ordinary people when he empowers them – using a group of fishermen to start a church, and taking a Christian hating murder in Saul, and making him Paul, one of the greatest Christian evangelists. Luke is telling us what accepting the Holy Spirit can do in our lives, and he's telling us we work together with those who have come before us, the Lord will add the saved to our numbers every day.