

Sermon Text for June 9, 2024

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Deuteronomy 1:26-33, Matthew 11:16-19 ***“What will we do with this generation?”***

This week marked the 80th anniversary of D-Day and some of the most powerful images from the week were veterans who were still living going back to where they fought. It was impossible not to remember and admire what would have been called the greatest generation. Each generation has their own personality and their own title and some would even say their own characteristics. Do you know what generation you are? Let's go over them, just for fun.

If you were born between 1901-1927 you were a part of this generation that we saw celebrating 80 years of D-Day, they were called the greatest generation. Tom Brokaw gave them this title and they were celebrated for their response to WWII. 1928-1945 was called the silent generation. They grew up in the Great Depression and as a result were more demure than past and future generation. 1946-1964 were the Baby Boomers who were a result of the soldiers coming home after the war and 18 years of unprecedented birth rates. 1965-1980 was generation X who tended to not care as much about the trappings of society and had a fear of being forgotten. 1981-1996 were the millennials were defined by 9/11 and the turning of the century. 1997-2012 is generation Z the first generation to grow up with the internet as part of their daily life. Finally, 2013-24 the alpha generation, still being shaped and defined and will eventually become what we can call screenagers. From their earliest years screens have been their way of life.

So where do you fall? One common thread is that each generation before the other things the successive generation are less than the ones that follow and think they are harder workers than the generations that come. Each previous generation complains about the future generations to the point where future generations use their titles as derogatory. For example calling someone a boomer is not a compliment in most circles today. For the older generations calling someone a millennial is certainly not a compliment either.

Both of our Scriptures today speak to our human propensity to forget the past faithfulness of God and focus on the present uncertainty as we face the future. We become obsessed with our present problems and have clear selective amnesia of the faithfulness of God which repeats itself over and over again. But Jesus requires a generation that is not age based, but a generation of belief who puts their trust and their future in his hands. We are called to be that generation and

this generation cuts across all ages and is defined by their common shared experiences and stories. Let's read.

READ

The most common theme in the Old Testament as a whole is a command by God to his people to remember the faithfulness of God. God has to repeat himself over and over again because the people of God have a tendency to forget from one day to the next. Our Deuteronomy Scripture is one of many pointing to the people of God forgetting what God has done in their past and so is anxious about their future. This is a case study on faith memory. You know that anytime that I say the people of God you should be able to self identify.

Anytime that we read about the Israelites forgetting what God had done for them we should be saying to ourselves, wait, that's me too. The people of God say I want to go back to Egypt because we had it better back there and back then. We hear people in society tell us that it was better back in the past, but that simply is not true. The only way to make ourselves better is through obedience to God, not by trying to go back in time.

There is a desire to go back to a generation that seemed simpler and easier but God wants us to live in the here and now. In fact, the people of God were punished for how long, until an entire generation died off and a new generation was able to inherit the promised land. We hear in the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 a command to teach our children about the faithfulness of God so that we would not forget. Each generation within this church has to be reminded of the faithfulness of God. But this work has to be done at home as well. We have to remind our kids about God's faithfulness because sometimes the reality of life makes us forget.

It is in this church where we are able to shape our identities of who we are. How is our identity created? We can't just choose and decide who we are and what we are. An identity is not an internal construct or a choice but it is one shaped by stories. We shape the identities of the generations to come here by telling them of the faithfulness of God not only in Scripture but also in our own individual lives. God's faithfulness is passed down through the generations in our stories.

If we are not proactive in this church to help create the identity of the generations coming up then we might find ourselves to have identity imposed upon us by the outside. Jesus is visibly frustrated with the generation in which he finds himself. He says what can I compare this generation to? When we lived in Italy one of the fun outings Stacy and I would take would go to the market and go shopping there. There was about a mile of stalls with everything you could imagine being sold there. The meat was hanging from rabbit to chickens, to whole pigs. Octopus were slithering around and eel.

It was always busy and packed and the voices that stood out the most were the children, the young boys, who would call out to each other and make fun of each other the whole entire day. That's how they spent their days in the summer, calling out to each other and playing with each other but not being able to wander too far from their stand. Jesus compares his generation to these children calling out to each other but with no real focus or understanding of who was in their midst.

Jesus would probably classify his generation as the generation of unbelief. His contemporaries refused to believe that he is the inauguration of the age of fulfillment. They simply did not believe that he was the Messiah. We see in the New Testament story after story of Jesus being rejected, even by those closest to him. Our tendency is to believe what we want to believe and as we saw last week, the people of God had already formulated a very clear understanding of what the Messiah was going to look like, and Jesus simply did not fit the bill for the Messiah. What am I going to do with this generation?

It wasn't just Jesus. John didn't fit the bill either. John was too holy for them, he didn't hang out in social gatherings and certainly would not be seen at a party. He was too holy and unapproachable. He wasn't one of the guys. Jesus wasn't holy enough, he was too much like one of us. I don't want my Messiah to be my friend, I want him to be God. This generation could write John off because of his abstention and could write Jesus off because of his banqueting with sinners.

In this way, both were dismissed as irrelevant. Both are killed because of their role in the faith story. John is too holy and Jesus is not holy enough. But for us, today in this generation, no matter how old we are, they are both helpful while Jesus is simply our Savior without whom we would be lost. The world would be happy to give us an identity and we work hard to create our own identity which is unique and based upon the current events of the world. We align ourselves with people and with movements which has no desire to act according to the will of God because we mistakenly believe that for such a time as this we are called to turn our back on the faithfulness of God because today requires something more dramatic.

The times in which we are living are no more perilous or dangerous than the times in which Jesus lived. We are never called to act or to follow anyone who doesn't reflect the will of God in their actions and their words. Jesus requires a generation of belief who puts their trust and their future in his hands and not in the hands of anyone else. We may not know the answers to suffering and have all the solutions to the present age, but no other God has scars and we cannot forget that. We follow a God who is willing to lay down His life for us, we must do the same. Amen.