

Sunday 21C 2010

Dove of Peace Lutheran Church

Pastor Stephen Springer

August 22, 2010

Occasional; Jeremiah 1:4-10

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Friends:

When I was young, I knew one thing about Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a bullfrog. Three Dog Night released that song in 1971. I was in first grade.

Recently, I read a long scholarly argument that the prophet Jeremiah assembled and edited a large part of the Bible, that Jeremiah was in fact the person that scholars have nicknamed “D,” the Deuteronomist. If that’s true, then Jeremiah wrote quite a bit of the Bible that we now have. Even if that’s not true, he wrote at least one big book, and maybe a smaller second book. He is one of the four so-called major prophets, along with Daniel, Ezekiel, and the great Isaiah. He lived a long time. He had a long career. When we meet him at the beginning of his book today, he is a boy. God puts God’s hand on Jeremiah’s mouth, and says “There, now I’ve put my words in your mouth,” and thus starts a career that spanned several generations.

If you’ve been around here for the past few weeks, and if you’ve been partially awake, I’ve been preaching a series of sermons on the core aspects of our congregation’s future ministry. For a year, we’ve been engaged in a long process of conversations and studies and surveys. The formal work on this plan will begin January 1st, after we’ve all had a chance to study it. The purpose of these sermons is to lay down some of the theological foundations. And this is the seventh of eight sermons. So far, we’ve talked about ecumenism and partnership with other faith communities, personal story, service and advocacy for the poor and forgotten, care for creation, worship, and the ministry of the laity. Next week we talk about diversity. And we have some exciting drum music from around the globe to help stimulate our thoughts. Today, we’re talking about generations. Specifically, that we are going to be a generation-conscious congregation as we minister and grow. People think and behave differently. I’m not talking about age. I’m talking about how the times that we live in shape us.

I was astonished to learn this week that most young people no longer write in cursive. Beloit College in Beloit Wisconsin releases a statement every August about the freshman class. To try to wake up the professors. For today’s eighteen year-old American, Clint Eastwood is a respected film director. They’ve never heard of anyone named Dirty Harry. And they don’t wear watches. Their cell phones function as their watches, and they are naked without their cell phones as I would feel without my watch.

So the young are on our minds. Today we begin another year of Sunday School and Confirmation. We have a small number of young people— although not nearly as small as you think. As I’ve said in the past, every child and teen at Dove of Peace is a VIP. It’s one of the advantages of being in a

church that has a lot of older adults. We treasure our children. And we depend on them to teach us how to use our electronic equipment. I am happy to say that my sermons are now available as a Podcast on Itunes. You talk about exhausted! I've been to the world of the young, and now I need a vacation.

At Dove of Peace, we are blessed to have an extra share of the generation that Tom Brokaw has called the Greatest Generation. The can-do people who won the Second World War, and made America the most prosperous nation in the world. We won't have them much longer. My father was one of them. The day he died, I aged twenty years. You know what I mean? They are still taking care of us, paying our bills, and fixing our cars. They are the backbone of this congregation. That's why they're great. But not much longer. I hope somebody is listening.

Then there's my generation. More or less known as Generation X. The youngest members of my generation are the cover story on today's [Sunday New York Times magazine](#). Why won't we grow up, the article asks. We are the ones who come after the Baby Boomers. The Baby Bust. Everyone looks down on us for being under-achievers. But we are very practical people. We are problem-solvers. And for the next twenty years, we are going to be your leaders, your doctors, your pastors, and your bankers. We'll still be living at home with our parents... But we will be running the show. And we'll be doing it on a shoestring. And we'll be doing it with our own panache, and our own fierce determination.

And so look at the generations would be complete without mentioning the Baby Boomers. They are near and dear to my heart. The Baby Boomers are basically everyone who is older than me, up to about age 65. If you think of me as the youngest, and if you think of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush as the oldest. It's everybody in between. They are the biggest group of Americans in history. The richest. The most educated. And they are beginning to retire, and will continue to be retiring for the next 20 years, while my generation moves into their shoes. They are retiring. And they are moving to Tucson. Actually, either Boca Raton or Tucson.

A church like ours tends to become very focused on the extremes. Actually, all churches tend to be focused on the oldest and the youngest. Churches say that the children are the future. And they're right. But they aren't going to be in this church. Our children are going to be adults living in Seattle or Madison or Philadelphia. We live in a mobile society. The kids at Dove of Peace today are not going to be the adults that are here tomorrow. For the most part.

Dove has to be particularly concerned with adults. Partly because nobody else seems to be concerned. Churches all focus on the youngest and the oldest. No church in Tucson is welcoming Baby Boomers. And we are going to. Because what we have, they need. And what they have, we need.

Jeremiah was more than a bullfrog. He was a prophet for all generations. Dove of Peace is going to be a congregation for all generations. Amen.