

Devotion – Week of March 27, 2022 – Fourth Week of Lent

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

I went to a funeral last week of a very good man. Herb died at the age of 94 after a long, productive life. He had three children who have all done well with careers and family. He is survived by 9 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren, in addition to his wife. He met her in the band at age 14 – they both played clarinet. He served in the army at the end of WWII and was recalled during the Korean War. Herb and his wife graduated from Auburn, and both had good careers – he as an engineer and she as a pharmacist.

A lifetime Presbyterian, he sang in the choir from childhood on, as well as a local concert chorale, and he volunteered for various public service organizations. Herb was described as meticulous and steady with a sense of humor. That's how I knew him as an older adult - he was always in Sunday School and showed up for my Wednesday night Theology School programs with readings done and his notebook in hand.

I think a lot about this generation of seniors in our country – children during the depression, faithful soldiers for our country, coming home to college and exploration of new careers, raising a family with quiet grace, and participating in the life of their church and community with enthusiasm and generosity. My parents were that way, and some of you followed that similar path, or your parents did. This “greatest generation” survived the hardships of deprivation and war to build a society based on the idea that anyone could better him/herself with an education and hard work. And those of us in the “baby boomer” generation are the recipients of that outlook. It was a vision of hope – a belief that they could build a better world, and that life would be passed on to children and grandchildren.

I look around today at the news and wonder what happened when I see the craziness of violence, get blown out of the road by speedsters in their hopped up cars, and deal with rude or non-respondent service staff on the phone.

But last week Jim and I also experienced the goodness of the newer generation. We spent the day at the University of Georgia and got to meet the girls' softball team, as well as other athletes. We were always greeted with “Yes Sir” and “Yes Ma'am.” Students were friendly and enthusiastic and thankful for the generosity of those like us who want to support their programs. I watched young adults working incredibly hard on treadmills and weight machines and running sprints. So I came home aware that there is an alternate reality to the view of young adults as self-centered, spoiled brats. And it made me grateful for my parents and others who taught us to be kind, polite, and friendly.

So as Jesus taught us to follow his path, I hope we can teach our children and grandchildren to follow our path, and for those who have no role models to follow, I hope we can support programs and mentors who will step in and take on the task of guiding the next generation. I am grateful for a week where I was shown that life can be so full of grace and thankfulness, if we merely look for it and practice it in our own relationships. I am reminded of this verse from Psalm 128:

Happy is everyone who fears the Lord,
who walks in his ways.
You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

May you have a week of quiet joy in the presence of those you love.

Jeanne