

Josh 14:7-12 (a message from Caleb, Joshua's best friend)

I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, 8 but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. 9 So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' 10 "Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! 11 I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. 12 Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said." NIV

Ah, the golden years! I love being with the seniors in this church. Yes, they have their own youth group called the Retired and Rambling group. Next week we are going to the Broadway Palms theatre to eat lunch and watch the performance of Yankee Doodle Dandy.

Here are just a few things that are great about being older.

- In a hostage situation you are likely to be released first
- People no longer view you as being a hypochondriac
- You enjoy hearing about other people's operations
- There is nothing left to learn the hard way
- You can have a party and the neighbors won't even know it
- Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either

Have you noticed there is a stereotype when it comes to seniors in this country? They drive slow, they're always sick, they can't remember anything, they're always grouchy....they can't hear....wait a minute...that's me? The two groups that are more likely to be stereotyped are teens and seniors.

By the way, do know what the definition of an old person is? Anyone who is 15 years older than yourself. When I was 20, the old people were 35. When I was 35 the old folks were 50. Now that I am 57, the old folks are Buddy and Bernie...My mother, who is 89, she is not here today, didn't want to go to this one restaurant last week because

she said it was just full of old people.

Our culture has been teaching us the last 40 years that it isn't good getting older. We should stay young forever; hide the wrinkles, smooth and tighten the skin, get a shot or two of Botox. We have been duped into thinking that wrinkles are bad, and slowing down is worse. If you watch television you will not see seniors on *American Idol*, the *Bachelor*, or most sitcoms. But, for all you *Dancing with the Stars* fans this season 80 year old Buzz Aldrin, my all time favorite astronaut who walked on the moon, will be dancing....go Buzz!

It's time to set the record straight! The seniors in this church are nothing like the stereotypes we have heard. Today, I would like to celebrate the golden years and look at seniors the way God looks at seniors.

1. Seniors are a _____ (devoted) group.

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The seniors that attend this church are examples of this verse. They have learned that being devoted to the teaching of God's Word is what gets them through life. Today we have experts in every field imaginable. We have experts in parenting. We have experts in marriage. We have experts in finances. I bet if you interviewed the seniors in this church they didn't attend a marriage seminar or parenting seminar when they were younger. They searched the scriptures for the truth regarding their marriages or raising their children.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Seniors are devoted to one another. Very seldom will Don or I have to wonder how one of the seniors is getting along. Their friends let us know. They watch out for each other. They eat together, have amazing fellowship, and pray. In fact they have prayed their way to their age!

Matt 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall.. (turn page)

Matt 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

As is turns out, the golden years may really be golden after all. A recent study suggests that older Americans are not only the happiest Americans, but they are also more socially active than most. Although many older individuals face health

problems, they are generally more content with what they have than younger Americans.

2. Seniors are a _____ (serving) group.

Deut 11:13-15 So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today — to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul — 14 then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. 15 I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

God makes a promise that if we obey and serve him, he will send rain to your land and provide grass for your cattle. He is a God of provision to those who give Him their heart and soul.

I want to congratulate the seniors here today who serve their God. He has provided well for you. Thank you for keeping these buildings from falling down, for serving the homeless and provided meals, for helping Pastor Chad and Pastor Jared with the children and youth. Thanks for your service to this community!

If it wasn't for seniors, most of the hospitals and homeless shelters would not survive. Most of the churches would close their doors. God has a thing for people who serve. They sometimes live a long life!

Moses/Aaron – served until they were 120/123 yrs respectively

Job lived “140 years after his ordeal” and died at a very great age the Bible says

Sarah- 127 yrs

Abraham- 175

Isaac- 180

Jacob- 147

Joseph- 110

Joshua-110

Eli- 98

Paul- "the aged one"

3. Seniors have _____ (Stories) to tell.

Ps 145:7 Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness;

they will sing with joy of your righteousness. NLT

Ps 78:4 We will not hide them from their children ; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. NIV

Isa 5:7 This is the story of the LORD's people. NLT

Do we really know the story of our seniors here? Why does the Lord want us to share our stories with the next generation? Could it be that God has been with them longer than most of us? Could it be He has something for us through them?

Do you want to know how to raise children? Do you want to know how to plan for your financial future? Do you want to know how to go about writing a book? Do you want to know what it was like being at the Nazi prison camp, Auschwitz? Do you want to know what to do if your teenager runs away, or gets involved with drugs? How do you handle losing someone in car crash? How do you press on when your spouse decides they no longer want to be married to you? What is it like to fight in a war or to have a loved one in the military away from home? What would it be like to lose a leg or be given the news of a terminal disease or raise a handicap child? How would you handle total financial bankruptcy? What do you do when you lose your job and you're in your 50's? How do you get past loneliness when your spouse dies? What can your family do for fun that doesn't involve a phone, television, or computer?

God gave these people answers. Find out. Invite them to your HomeTeam. Take them out to lunch. They have stories they can share. God needs them in His world so they can be an extension of His grace!

**Job 32:7-8 'Those who are older should speak, for wisdom comes with age.'
8 Surely it is God's Spirit within people, the breath of the Almighty within them, that makes them intelligent.**

4. Seniors should be _____ (honored)!

Ex 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

Ps 91:15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in

trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. NKJV

It was God's intention that the people He chose to grow older be honored. Generally, we do not do this as a country. We give honor to the troops, have parades for the Super Bowl winners, fly flags at half mast when a famous politician dies. But, the Psalm that I read says that God delivers and honors those who trust in him. If God does this, how much more should we?

Seniors, you are the matriarchs and patriarchs of this congregation and we praise God for delivering you and bringing you to this family of believers!

Prov 16:31 Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life. NIV

5. Seniors, continue the _____ (good fight).

1 Tim 1:18-19 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight , 19 holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. NIV

The difference of going into the golden years with dread or cheerful anticipation is faith. The only thing that can shipwreck faith is fear!

Matt 6:25-27 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? NIV

Jesus says that worry will not add a single hour to our life. But, we are so slow to learn this truth...are we not? Why is it that we can keep Jesus' commands about lying or stealing or adultery, but we cannot keep this command in regards to worry?

A recent study busted some of the things we worry about to pieces. You won't hear about this study on the nightly news.

- 80% of us who are over the age of 55 will live and ultimately die at home.
- Only 5% of those older than 55 will live in a nursing home. ½ of those only live there because there is no one to care for them.
- 85% of those over 65 years of age are considered healthy.
- Only 10% of the population will experience any form of senility, but this is not due to aging, but choices made in their younger life.
- 13% of those over 65 say that they are lonely but add they are learning to deal with it. That same study revealed that 65% of young adults are lonely.

We worry about things we should not.

Ps 92:12-15

2 The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; 13 planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, 15 proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him." NIV

Will you put your hands together today for the seniors that the Lord has brought to this church!

Communion

One time I was with an older friend who was dying and we were talking about his impending death. He was not afraid or worried about it. He was just wondering why it was taking so long. I told him that God does things that are mysterious to us. But, I did tell him that he was showing me how to die with the trust and peace he had in Christ. He died a few hours later.

Jesus Christ also showed us how to die when he was on the cross. He even forgave those who put him on it.

Eph 2:17-18 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. NIV

Let's pray.....