

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:4-8, Exodus 7:1-7

Sermon Title: "Never too Young. Never too Old."

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Why is faith important? I asked this question of some of the folks in our congregation over the past week and here are a few of the thoughts that I received. Faith is important because "you need to be able to believe in something". "Faith gets us through the challenging moments." Faith reminds us that "there is someone there who cares." "Faith reduces a lot of anxiety." With faith, there is "always something you can hope for." All very meaningful responses. All very moving and thought-provoking. All relevant. Now, can you tell the ages of those who answered? Can you pick out the answers shared by our youth last Saturday evening? Can you pick out the answers shared by some of our adults? Or is it easier to simply say, there is some wisdom found in all of these thoughts, regardless of the age of the one who shared them.

You know, I believe that we as a society have often allowed age to have a little too much power in our lives. We have used age to determine what people should be doing when. There are expectations about the achievements that a person should have accomplished by a certain age. We have used age to determine a person's fitness for a job or task, being considered too young or too old. We have allowed age to prevent us from sometimes seeing the person behind the number. And while there can be some truth and value in the ways in which we look at and utilize the number that is age, it can also prevent us from following God's calling in our lives. It can place us in a box that we are not ready to be placed in just yet or it can hold us in a box from which we are ready to step out.

What if Jeremiah held fast to the notion that his age prevented him from being ready for the task of being a prophet? He would not have carried God's Word of Hope to those who needed to hear it, those who were suffering, those who felt defeated, those who saw and felt their identity as God's people collapsing, and what is now a 52 chapter long ministry reported in the book of Jeremiah would have ended before the close of

chapter 1. What if Moses thought that his age of 80, being what turned out to be two-thirds of the way through his life, had prevented him from being the voice for the Jewish captives and leading them out of slavery, into the wilderness, and toward their future and Promised Land? What if Moses had decided, half way through his ministry that his age now prevented him from doing God's work and it was time for him to step aside rather than working for God to his dying day as he did do? The first five books of the Old Testament would look rather different wouldn't they?

Now one might ask would these messages still have been received and would the work still have been done even if these two, Jeremiah and Moses, had said no? My faith tells me yes - but the point is that Jeremiah and Moses were called by God to do this work. Their age was not the factor for, after all, God saw them, God saw a need, God knew that they could fill it, and God called them! It's not a question so much of what would have happened if they didn't answer the call as it is a commentary on our willingness to follow God's Call, even if we don't feel ready. Even if we don't feel able. Even if we feel too young or too old. For God can use us all!

When I first felt convicted by this calling to ministry, I had my Jeremiah moment of saying but I am too young. I thought I needed to live more of life. I couldn't possibly be ready, for this work, could I? How could I deal with the spectrum of life events that one is called to speak into when I myself had not experienced them first hand? How could I possibly be ready for such a calling? No, I felt I needed to live more of life first. I needed to be older. But all along, God was saying, you need to follow me - do what I am calling you to do, go down the path that I am calling you to walk. And so the journey began. And at the age of 24, I graduated seminary and was ordained. And at the age of 26, I was called to serve among you, here in this place.

Now, as my journey was beginning, there was a parallel journey taking place in the life of another. Someone else who was feeling the calling to ministry being placed in her life. Her name is Bonnie. Bonnie too was feeling a calling into ministry, and though she may have tried to resist at times wondering why her and why now, she followed God's

call for her and began down the path that God was calling her to walk, and we graduated together from Lancaster Theological Seminary in 2015. And at the age of 72, she graduated seminary. And at the age of 74, began serving her first congregation in Pennsylvania.

So what is our take away today? I want our children to know that you are never too young to change the world. You are never too young to live for God, to share love with the world, to do extraordinary things! And I want our adults to know that you will never be too old to change the world. You will never be too old to live for God, to share love with the world, to do extraordinary things! The message is really universal. For just as God called Jeremiah in his youth, with all the gifts that youth can bring, God called Moses in his adulthood, with all the gifts that age can bring. And God calls the church together, in all the beautiful ways in which diversity is found in our world, for we all have gifts to bring.

And this is the real beauty of the church – that there are gifts found in every age. Gifts that, when united for the work of the church are powerful. Gifts that, when united to share God’s love and live God’s grace, can transform the world! So what do you say God’s children of all ages, youngest to oldest, tallest to the smallest, will you follow? Will you unite? Will you share the gifts that you bring, cherish the gifts brought by others, and do great things as we join together to serve? I pray that the answer is always “yes”, no matter your age! Amen.