BUFFALO UNITED METHODIST

Sun May 3 - Standing on the Promises | Luke 2:25-38

Recently I was at the Buffalo Hospital awaiting my first ever cortisone shot, bored but grateful to be out of my apartment.

So, I started doing what people do when you are out in public and bored. Specifically, I started watching people. Specifically…their purses. I saw one I loved, feverishly looking for it online…when it hit me.

"Oh my gosh, my mom loved purses! She would be so pleased that I've come to love purses too!

For her, a purse was absolutely essential. You never know when you might need a Philips screwdriver, enough Kleenex to clog the Mississippi, or a rain poncho.

Full circle, I've become my mother.

And that got me thinking…It's not just habits we inherit, my mom liked people watching too. We also inherit ways of SEEING the world.

And that raises a bigger question for us today: *What do we receive from the generations around us in the life of faith?*

This week I also realized I am becoming my dad.

There are rocks all over my apartment parking lot. And I got fed up with it. So, I am out there… kicking them into a dustpan… muttering…"Have some PRIDE, people."

Full-circle, my dad cared deeply about the yard. And somehow… now I do too.

As I reflect on those experiences, it helps me feel more connected to my parents and their generation and their values.

What surprised me wasn't just that I'm becoming my parents—it's that their values are still shaping how I see the world.

And that raises a deeper question: ***what do we inherit or absorb from the generations before us AND after us in our life of faith?***

But here's the problem.

We don't always see each other clearly.

As a church, we can sometimes overlook the gifts of older generations or fail to see what God is doing in and through younger generations among us, right? We don't mean to; it can just happen.

Sometimes we overlook the older generation…

Sometimes we dismiss the younger generation…

Some love paper Bibles…some love their Bibles on their phones.

I'll let you guess where I fall on that one.

And when that happens, we don't just miss each other, we risk missing what GOD is doing.

That's why Simeon and Anna matter so much to us.

They spent a lifetime in the temple paying attention to God. Simeon and Anna model spiritual attentiveness shaped by a lifetime of faith. Simeon, guided by the Spirit, recognizes in the infant Jesus the fulfillment of God's promise and proclaims salvation for all nations.

Anna, formed through personal loss, years of worship and prayer, immediately perceives God's work and shares this good news of real hope in the infant Jesus with others.

And because of that, more people could embrace the fulfillment of the promises of the Messiah. They too saw SALVATION.

Their spiritual sensitivity allows them to notice Jesus and understand his importance when others might have missed it.

And their gifts—Simeon's Spirit-led insight and Anna's faithful witness—blesses everyone around them. And revealing that a life formed in devotion not only recognizes God's movement but speaks up and helps others see it too.

Simeon and Anna, as spiritual grandfathers and grandmothers bless the younger generations of Joseph and Mary.

Continuing to bless us even today; expanding and enriching our understanding of what Jesus came to do. Opening people's eyes to see Jesus, who is often easy to overlook.

His name was Peter Jensen. White hair, always wore a red plaid shirt with tan pants, in his late 80's, and so very quiet. He had been a pastor. He did everything quietly, faithfully, and consistently.

He went about his tasks of copying and stapling, sending out cards to those needing care, preparing name tags. Whatever needed to be done, he was happy and humble enough to do it.

And I didn't see it.

I missed the beauty of it in the moment.

I missed seeing Jesus in him.

And I wonder how often we do the same?

How we overlook quiet faith because it doesn't look impressive, missing Jesus because it doesn't look urgent.

I wonder what we might be missing out on…wisdom from older members, missing out on calling out and enjoying the gifts of the younger people, missing God because we expect him to look a certain way?

The promise of the Messiah and of the salvation he brings binds together all the generations in this passage.

Together under God's promise, the elders bless and confirm the younger generations. Teaching us to put our hope in the Lord and trust in him above all else.

Our hope is in him, in the Lord, more than anything else, right?

More than if our budget is fine or not…we keep looking to the Lord. More than if young families come through that door with six kids in tow or not…we keep looking to the Lord.

We hope more in the Lord than what hymns we sing or don't sing, right? We look to the Lord.

And when we forget, we look around and are reminded to look to the Lord in the little sermons you preach…how you serve, give, and worship.

We don't just attend church together—we *complete* each other's vision of what God is doing in our midst.

We are bound by past generations whose faithfulness has paved the way for us, for our present generations to thrive and for future generations to flourish in Christ.

I am surprised about how much I have been thinking about past generations lately. Recently, I was re-watching a movie with Antonio Banderas and heard this amazing Viking Prayer.

Lo, there do I see my father. Lo, there do I see my mother, and my sisters, and my brothers. Lo, there do I see the line of my people…back to the beginning. Lo, they do call to me. They bid me take my place among them. In the halls of Valhalla, where the brave may live forever.

Even cultures without Christ recognized something true—we are shaped by those who came before us. The gospel doesn't erase that—it redeems it and anchors it in Christ.

They understood the pull and power of the previous generations. How we are bound together by our families, a strong lineage. As Christians, we might refer to the "great cloud of witnesses" as having a pull on us, calling us to trust our future to the Lord.

The difference is—for us, that connection is rooted in CHRIST…not just ancestry.

God has given me a different way to feel deeply connected to previous generations. There's a word for this connection across generations. It's called "apostolic succession".

It means this. We stand in a long line of people who trusted in Christ before us.

And now we take our place in that line.

And as we take our place in that line, as we live linked together for Christ it impacts the generations coming after us, the younger generations.

They have a front row seat to learn about Christ through our lives. Which is so powerful! Because I believe that faith is more caught than taught.

I couldn't help myself, I kept thinking about our 140 years of being a church and our 40 years of being in this location? What a wonderful legacy!

In discussing the generations in this next sermon series, I sense God is preparing us to have a wonderful time of remembering and celebrating God's goodness to us in October.

I hope you will step up to help in some way. It will take all of us to remember God's goodness and faithfulness to us here at BUMC.

Simeon and Anna waited with faithful patience for the fulfilment of God's promises and yet they could not have known that the "Lord's Messiah," (v. 26) "the consolation of Israel," (v. 25) the "redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 38) would show up in the form of a baby in the temple. They were not expecting that!

But when God in the form of a baby showed up in their faces, in their arms, they knew it, they perceived it.

Today, we've been reminded that every generation has a place in what God is doing: those who came before us, those beside us, and those still to come.

And one of the clearest pictures we see that is at the Table, as we celebrate Communion together in just a few minutes.

The Table is the place where every generation meets. Where the faith of Simeon and Anna…the hope of Mary and Joseph…our parents or parents in the faith…the promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ…and us.

We belong—not just to this moment, but to the whole story of God's people. Amen!

As we reflect, let me leave you with this:

1. What would change if we truly treated every generation here as essential to God's work?

2. And what is ONE step you could take this week to build a real connection with someone from a different generation?