

“OK Boomers and Zesty Zers”

Rev. Ken McGarry at The First Church in Stoneham, Massachusetts
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[Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Mark 8:31-38](#)

“OK, Boomer.” Perhaps you’re familiar with this phrase, a dismissive comment offered to Baby Boomers, those born between the end of World War Two and the mid-1960s, or their elders, usually by someone of a younger generation, in response to something the elder person says or does that the younger person feels is archaic, insensitive, or out of touch with modern attitudes. Or maybe you’re familiar with an equally dismissive phrase that might be offered by the elder in response, “kids these days!” We have these and plenty of other intergenerational disses because between one generation and another there are real differences in commonly held values, beliefs, and behaviors, and as it can be hard for people of one age group to understand those of another, it’s much easier to not even try to understand, but rather to dismiss another person or their perspective as being incomprehensible or irrelevant. This is true between the generations today, and it was the same back in the “good old days” when Boomers were the kids who couldn’t understand their own elders.

But there are other, better ways to view and respond to the unfamiliar ways of people of another generation. One of these is to consider them not to be an annoyance, but as a gift. God has blessed us with a variety of people in this world, and our various ways of understanding and dealing with life, formed largely by having differing experiences in our childhood and youth, is a beautiful and good part of our shared human experience. So we should be grateful together that we have such variety in our lives, and instead of disrespecting or dismissing those of a different generation, perhaps we could find ways to better understand and bless them.

We just heard in our first scripture lesson about one generation blessing others in the story of elderly Abram and Sarai receiving the blessing of a covenant with God, that though they were in their 90s, they would miraculously have a child and become ancestors of multitudes of nations, passing on to these later generations the gift of life and God’s blessing in it.

And in our second lesson from the Gospel of Mark, we read about how one of their descendants, Jesus, would pass on to his disciples, a later spiritual generation, the gift of the God-blessed life he had received and carried. Jesus told his disciples that he would pass on this gift through suffering and giving his very life for their sake. His disciple Peter rebuked his teacher, because Peter and the other disciples expected Jesus not to suffer and die from but to overcome the mighty and powerful, establish a new, just, and glorious realm, and reign in glory and peace. So Peter rebuked Jesus, perhaps beginning with some dismissive “OK, Boomer”-like comment, but he himself was then rebuked as Jesus taught that not only would he travel a difficult, life-giving path to bless them, but that he required them, the next generation, to carry on this way of being, blessing others and themselves through self-sacrifice, that Christ’s way of the cross would become their own.

Those of us who are gathered here today have inherited this way from our spiritual ancestors. We have received from them the blessing of this difficult path, and we pass it on to the next generation of Christ-followers, including young Raya, baptized into our family of faith just moments ago. And hopefully, we will pass on to Raya and all of our children and their children a more blessed and beautiful world, in which more people seek to give rather than gain, to lift up rather than tear down, and to lovingly share the gifts of life with the generations to come rather than to greedily consume them all for themselves.

This is what we the people of this generation have been called to do now. We are called to recognize that so much of what we have today has been given to us as a blessing from those who came before us. We are called to realize that what we have is not ours alone, for so much of our own resources are truly being borrowed from the generations who will come after us. We are called to carry our own cross, always giving of ourselves for the good of others, especially those most in need of God’s blessings.

Can we share the blessing of life today with our elders, so many of whom are feeling disconnected from others and struggle with loneliness, by growing closer to them in our community? Can we do the same for our youngsters, many of whom, like our oldest ones, struggle with loneliness, by surrounding them with genuinely loving relationships? Can we offer a more inclusive and loving

community for not only our oldest and youngest generations but for all of our differing people, especially those who feel as though they don't belong?

This Lent, may we all take up the cross of Christ and become more faithful, self-giving disciples. Above all, may we selflessly love those who need love most. If we do, there will be a lot more OK Boomers and zesty Zers, merry Millenials and exuberant Xers, spirited Silents and all-right Alphas, which is the name given to little Raya and her friends' generation. And as we seek to bless all, may we, in all of our generations, be blessed. Amen.