

“Loving Guides”

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*First Presbyterian Church
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Deuteronomy 6: 4-9
II Timothy 1:1-14*

Little Tony was so happy to see his grandmother that he ran up and gave her a big hug. “I’m so happy to see you, grandma. Now daddy will have to do that trick he’s been promising to do!” His grandmother was curious, “What trick is that, sweetie?” The little guy grinned at her. “I heard daddy tell mommy the he would climb the walls if you came to visit us again!”

A little boy asked his grandmother what year she was born. She told him she was born in 1935. “Wow!” the boy exclaimed. “If you were a baseball card, you’d be worth lots of money.”

Her grandson was visiting one day when he asked, “Gramma, do you know how you and God are alike?” She mentally polished her halo while she asked, “No, how are we alike?” “You’re both old.” he replied.

A sweet little boy surprised his grandmother one morning and brought her a cup of coffee. He made it himself and was so proud. He anxiously waited to hear the verdict on the quality of the coffee. The grandmother had never in her life had such a bad cup of coffee, and as she forced down the last sip she noticed three of those little green army guys in the bottom of the cup. She asked, “Honey, why would three little green army guys be in the bottom of my cup?” Her grandson replied, “You know grandma, it’s like on TV, ‘The best part of waking up is soldiers in your cup.’”

This morning we are celebrating our grandparents. We give thanks to God for them. Some of our grandparents are able to be with us this morning and we are so pleased you are here!!

Welcome! Welcome!

Some are at too much of a distance. Some have gone on to be with our Lord. My grandparents were born in the late 19th century. I did not know two of them very well. But I was blessed in being loved, deeply loved by grandmother Nora until she died in the early 1970’s.

Some of you have known all your grandparents, some one, two, or three. Perhaps your parents have told you stories of their parents. But, most of us have had the blessing of beloved grandparents, that familial connection with our past – the continuation of who we are and that we are connected and loved in a larger way than imaginable.

My mother was visiting over the last week. I really wanted her to be here today, but it didn’t work out. But, the family had a wonderful time with mother, grandmother, great-grandmother – insisting on cooking and baking up a storm of apple and blackberry pies, apple dumplings, homemade noodles, homemade apple sauce and much, much more!

It was a tough week, but we weathered it!

We talked about the past – childhood, mine, hers, her parents. Wonderful memories. We talked about her favorite Presbyterian minister Rev. Bingum (that is, favorite when she was a child). How important he and his wife were to her and her family back in Unionville in the 1930's and 40's.

We once again talked about her mother “Nora”, my grandmother, who is one of those people you can count on one hand who has had the largest impact on your life. That's my grandmother for me. A Christian lady. Devout. Loving. Caring. Always an example of what Jesus would do, from a woman of average means with little education, but with a huge heart and a keen mind.

Being a grandparent myself now for eight months I have learned the privilege of loving and holding my grandson, and of handing him back to mom. There are perks.

Referring to grandparents, Prof. Newman of the University of Pittsburgh states, “kids learn stuff from older people that they can't get from anybody else...

“Wisdom, patience, looking at things from many perspectives, tolerance and hope. Older adults have lived through wars, losses, economic deprivations, and they give kids the security of knowing that horrendous things can be survived.” For the older generation, the relationship is equally precious. “Having grandchildren is the vindication of everything one has done as a parent. When we see our children passing on our values to another generation, we know we have been successful,” says Margy-Ruth Davis, a new grandmother in New York City.

Which reminds me of the great “Shema” of the Old Testament in Deuteronomy. This was (is) to be committed to memory by all Hebrews – Jewish children. And of course, you, (we Christians) hear Jesus' injunction herein for all generations – from grandparents to grandchildren – to each generation – forever and ever and ever:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might...” Commit these words to your memory! Keep them in front of you at all times! Everywhere – even on the doorposts of your house!

Grandparents – they (you) have the stories - the memories – the values – to share to the young – to teach them the way to live! There is a taken for grantedness of given respect for the elders – the grandparents in the Bible, in antiquity, for they carried the wisdom of the past for the next generation. And that guidance was absolutely necessary for the next generation!

Of course we all love and appreciate our grandparents, their love and their help and their guidance. But, on a broader cultural level of our generational openness to seeking the wisdom of the past via, our religious traditions, Western Civilization – I wonder...

I even did a web search for “grandparents and respect.” The results were 5,110,000 finds in .26 seconds, but of the first five given, three were about how to get grandparents to respect your rules – instead of focusing on respecting grandparents. At least interesting – culturally.

Grandparents indeed function, have functioned as loving value guides for the children, for the culture at large. Too often the new, the latest fad takes over and we neglect what has worked in the past. We say, “Gram, it's too old fashioned, it's out of date.”

I'm reminded of a great poem written by Rudyard Kipling in 1919, just after the war to end all wars. The title, “The Gods of the Copybook Headings.” Thinking about grandparents, going back to the early to mid 20th century – copybooks were used in our schools, by students. The student would copy the exercise from the board to learn the skill of writing – i.e. copybook. And in the writing the students would learn more than the skill. You could count on the copybook headings; they were always there to teach. They may seem to grow old, but they remain steadfast, like the ancient Shema of the Bible. “Hear, O Israel, The lord our God is one

Lord, and you shall Love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might..." It never grows old! Loving Guidance!!

Kipling's Copybook poem – with biting sarcasm he screamed at his post-war listeners. Some things never change! Don't get pulled into beliefs that cause destruction, that harm. These are values to remember and cherish!!

As I pass through my incarnations in every age and race,
I make my proper prostrations to the Gods of the Market Place.
Peering through reverent fingers I watch them flourish and fall,
And the Gods of the Copybook Headings, I notice, outlast them all.

We were living in trees when they met us. They showed us each in turn.
That Water would certainly wet us, as Fire would certainly burn;
But we found them lacking in Uplift, Vision and Breadth of Mind,
So we left them to teach the Gorillas while we followed the March of Mankind...

Then the Gods of the Market tumbled, and their smooth-tongued wizards withdrew,
And the hearts of the meanest were humbled and began to believe it was true,
That All is not Gold that Glitters, and Two and Two make Four --
And the Gods of the Copybook Headings limped up to explain it once more.

Guidance!

This generation needs guidance!

The copybooks are available! For Christians – the Bible, The Judeo-Christian tradition, history, and more!

- As surely as water is wet!
- As surely as fire will burn!
- Two plus two is four!

Each generation needs reminding – some things never change! Our children need Loving Guides!

Thank God for grandma Lois! Tim's grandmother. Apparently, Tim is a third generation Christian, grandma Lois, mother Eunice and Tim. Paul knew them all! He writes about remembering them, of their sincere faith, that was first in grandmother Lois and then in his mother Eunice and now Paul writes, "I am sure dwells in you." (Timothy)

How wonderful! How inspiring!

Lois saw to it that Timothy heard about Jesus, about the values of a Godly life – a way of life. Lois surely shared such with her daughter Eunice.

Lois – a Loving Guide.

Our children need value guides. They need to learn those copybook stories that never change – that will give them good guidance throughout their lives. Again, today we celebrate our grandparents!

We give God thanks for them. For those of us who are grandparents, may we be responsible loving guides to our grandchildren, spoil them just enough and then hand them back.

Amen.