



Psalm 71

Over the past few months we have been looking at who we minister to as a church and we come to our last on the list, which is that we have been called to minister to older people. One of the characteristics of our modern generation is that we have come to see retirement for the potential it has in it. Increasing life expectancy and better health care has meant that people have a much more positive view and expectation of senior life than in the past. Can getting older be fun? View on.

CLIP – VICTOR MELDREW

The Third Age is a vague term to refer to those who are older in our society. Over 50s, silver-tops. The 21st century in Britain is very much the age of the Third Ager. SINCE 2007 there have been more over 65s in the population than under 16s and THERE WILL BE A RISE of 61% in numbers of over 65s until 2132. That includes people of my age.

This is reflected in the church too - in most churches OVER 50S dominate and this is particularly so in retirement towns like Felixstowe. Most people who study this say that there is a huge cultural gap between the Third Agers and the generations below them and that partly explains why most churches have problems in evangelism to those groups.

Today I want to look at the Third Agers in particular rather than the younger groups that we'd so like to reach because we need to recognise that in the older age group, PEOPLE ARE MUCH NEARER ETERNITY potentially than younger people and many of the unchurched in this group live in denial of death and eternity. If you go away with nothing else this morning, remember this urgency! I believe that this is as much of a challenge for the church as reaching to 20-40s because of this added urgency.

Now, this was going to be a sermon on "be nice to the old folks" but Psalm 71 is not a challenge to the young to look after their seniors, but to the seniors to set an example. In the Bible, those who have made senior years should always be looked upon as being blessed and possessing wisdom, experience and maturity.

*Job 32:7 "Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom."
Job 12:12 (NASB) Wisdom is with aged men, With long life is understanding."*

Respect for older people is therefore not for looking after them when they are frail – that in Scripture is implicit – but to respect for older people for the spiritual maturity they can impart. The challenge of Psalm 71 is for older people to be that example as the psalm is the prayer of an older man to be that example to both believers and unbelievers. God wants us to be and act like mature Christians and set the example and the pace for younger men and women. Next time we shall explore what that entails.

http://www.webministries.info/sermons/responsibility_of_the_third_age.pdf

*Preached by Mark Reid
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