

Older Adults Viable Workers for Kingdom

And Sarah laughed! And the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh?

What was God thinking, asking this question? Who would not laugh at such a ludicrous promise—an announcement that God would make it possible for Sarah to bear a child in her old age. After all, this was long before the advent of invitro fertilization and other medical advances that allow for older women to bear children well beyond nature's time frame! Who would not understand Sarah's response? More than 50 years after preaching my first sermon there is a part of me that still laughs at the way God has used me. The call to ordained ministry did not make sense then, and it doesn't make sense now. I am not that special to be been called into this vocation. Or am I? It has always been difficult to believe that no matter who we are, where we have been, where we have succeeded, where we have failed, that God can still use us. Nowhere perhaps, is this doubt, this faithlessness, more apparent than among some older adults.

"I can't do anything like I used to!"

"I earned my right to do nothing. It's my turn to sit and be waited on."

"Who would listen to an old lady/man like me anyway?"

"I can't see/hear as well as I used to."

And so goes the list of comments we all have heard and, sadly, often accepted as fact. Well, guess what? None of the above are valid reasons for not being challenged to be used by God, none are valid reasons for not living out the mandate to love our neighbor, which is always part and parcel of the call to Christian living.

I am always amazed by the number of people physically dying, who still reach out to those around them in love and concern, whose last act on earth is offering hope and assurance (God's work) to those around them. What an affirmation we can always be about "our father's business."

The challenge of ministering to/with older adults is to recognize the limitations that are real, and yet offer ways in which they can still serve God by loving service to someone else. Allowing the list of reasons for not reaching out to go unchallenged is unfaithful and misses the opportunity to help the older adult experience anew the joy of being called.

The truth is, we all are called—young and old, weak and strong, sick and well—to make the Kingdom of God a visible fact in the world. That is the challenge anyone in ministry with the older adult is called to issue!