

Message Book – 2705 - 12/5/21

Stop Waiting. Start Preparing.

By Bobby Schuller

Today I want to talk about, it's the Sunday of peace, and I know this might seem strange but I don't think this is true all the time, but I think in our country one of the reasons sometimes we experience a lack of peace has a lot to do with.. I'm trying to say this the right way; a lot to do with not honoring the elderly. I know that's not what you'd think the reason would be that I would give, but I've learned a lot over these years being a pastor of a church, and I've learned the value in honoring those who have come before us for the young, not just that those who have come before us sort of deserve it, but there is this great treasure that comes when you are connected to your history and when you know that what you are doing, what we're doing here not only has a history in whether you came from the Irvine Presbyterian side or the Crystal Cathedral side, but that there are men and women who came before us that prepared this for us, that we stand on the shoulders of giants, but even they had those who came before them, that we are a part of a story that's thousands of years old that's a part of what God is doing. And that gives, in many ways, a sense of peace when we live life.

I am a fan of history, and if I could, every sermon would just be thirty minutes of lecturing on something on history, but one thing that I think is true is every great society seems to have some system in place of honoring the older generation; some system in place, and some do more than others. It's not that every society has done that, it's just the great ones. And today we have ones that vary, so for example, in the near east and in the far east, actually, there are these systems in place. One that comes to mind only because I know from a friend is Korea. The Koreans very much have whole language systems in place for honoring the generation before them. I had a friend of mine who is Korean and she was saying that the pilots for Korean Air have to communicate in English because sometimes a younger co-pilot will have to correct the older co-pilot and the language.. I still don't totally understand it. I might have misunderstood her, but that there are.. it's hard to do, like it's just hard to correct someone that's older than you.

When Kim Jong-un came to power, for example, one of his greatest problems is he was 28-years-old and that you don't lead Koreans if you're 28. So maybe that's too much, I don't know. But I think that a lot of the issues.. this came to me in the shower, like many things do, right? Months ago. I looked at Hannah and I said 'we honor young people too much in America.' When I look at what all of the craziness; so much of the craziness that's happened, I think that some of it has come from honoring and inflating the egos of young people. Now I can say this

hopefully because hopefully I'm young enough to say it, but I don't know if I am. I'm turning 40 next year, so maybe I'm saying this because I know I'm going over the hill and I want to be honored. Maybe it's that.

But I think a lot of this in America came from the division between boomers and builders. Now just as an outsider, I'm neither of those generations. As the son of a boomer, it seems like that's where the first big, big rift came in American culture in the 60's. The boomers and the builders, see the builders, an amazing generation, they kicked down Hitler's door and built an incredible modern America, and the boomers, too, an amazing generation what they did, especially in the arts and music. But you look and there was for sure a rift there. Many of the boomers who were hippies said never trust anybody over the age of the 30. And then they turned 30 and they had a problem. And many of those boomers, I think, felt that way, one because they were privileged by the new wealth that was coming into the United States, but I think two, maybe the builders didn't bless as much. And I think that's what's supposed to happen in a sort of Godly society is that an older generation blesses down, and a younger generation honors. And maybe we forgot the difference between blessing and honoring.

I think our society idolizes youth. You want to look young, you want to be young, you want to act young, so that even as many people are getting much older, they're like terrified of being older. A lot of people in my parent's generation are this way. Almost because there's this

underlining thing that it's like if you're older, you're less valuable. Well that's crazy. And our whole society loses something, not just the individual who is aging, which includes everyone in this room, like even kids are aging, but the society loses something. It loses that connection to its history and its values and its principles and its priorities.

And so all of that to simply say I think that a lot of what we saw, for example, in Portland where even Portlanders were upset about what was happening to their city, and a lot of what happened in Seattle, and a lot of these things we look around, they just seem nuts, they seem crazy. In large part, I think, is the result of inflating the egos of young people who have not been through enough oftentimes to have such an extreme opinion.

I'm thankful for young people and we should bless them, and I am a huge believer in young people. I have kids, and I'm so grateful that there were people in my life who mentored me and taught me and blessed me. And that's what we need to do, we need to bless our kids, but sometimes we need to remember, we need to teach our kids, and we need to remember, those of us who are younger, to honor the older generation. I'm almost done with this, I promise. I feel like a lot of people are like we get it, but this is important to me.

In the Ten Commandments, one of the commandments is honor your father and mother, and that's a commandment really to honor the older generation because that was given to adults. It's too easy to think

that's given to children, but that's given to adults – honor your father and mother. And I heard a rabbi say this once, and I love Old Testament commentary from rabbis because many of them have memorized the Torah and so they come at it from a different angle. He said the Bible tells us to love our neighbor, the Bible tells us to love the immigrant, I would say the Bible tells us to love our enemies, even, but the Bible doesn't tell us to love our parents. It tells us to honor them. And he said sometimes it's not easy to love your parents in that way, to feel affection towards them, but even when you don't have that, there's still this thing in place where you have to be respectful.

And he said, and I agree with this, that it's not for the purpose of the elderly, it's for the purpose of the younger. That your ego is in check! That you're careful about in your lack of experience, you're careful to understand that this person who is 20/30/40 years your senior, maybe has suffered more than you have. Maybe has seen things that you haven't seen. Maybe has been through things that you haven't been through. And I think that's the key.

I know my grandparents blessed my parents, and I know my parents honor my grandparents, for example. Its more to say that there's an incredible value in spending time and in respecting and honoring those who have been through a lot, and so much of peace in life comes from a society who honors its story embodied in the very people among whom they live.

So for example, when I think of my parents, who are boomers, that they went through things that I read about in history books, like the assassination of JFK, or the I Have a Dream speech from Martin Luther King. I can't imagine that! That feels like ancient history to me, a kid born in the 80's. Or even more crazy, when I think about my grandparents who are here in the second pew, the Persley's, hello Mr. and Mrs. Persley fine to see you this bright morning. That my grandparents lived through the Depression, and that my grandpa was a paratrooper in the second World War! And I think we were stationed in Germany, isn't that right, grandpa? Stationed in Germany in a reconstruction time, right next to the Soviet Union. I mean all of this stuff, the Soviet block and the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet and the end of.. I mean for people my age, that is like incredible that I can sit down with my 92-year-old grandpa, hope it's okay that I said your age, and ask him what was that like! I think that's nuts! That is nuts and that does so much more than a history book ever could.

So when we are with those who have been through a lot, who have suffered a lot, who love us, there's a value in that that you can't get from anything else, and you also set up for yourself a way to do that for younger people when you're older, and that, I think, intrinsically like overall just brings so much peace to a society when the young and the old are eating together and talking, and when the older blesses the young and when the young honors the old. And maybe you had parents that

didn't bless you, or maybe your parents are gone and you can't honor them anymore. There are still ways you can find a parent figure or a child figure to honor or to bless. So we carry it in our bodies.

There's this great TV show where this idea really stands out that back in the 1950's and 60's called I Have a Secret, or I've Got a Secret where these contestants, famous people, I think Lucille Ball is in this, too, although she doesn't speak. In the panel you can see to the right. You guys can let me know if that's her or not, but famous people ask someone a question and the guest in this one was an old man, 96-year-old man, who witnessed the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Check this out:

(VIDEO ROLL IN)

MAN: Now then Mr. Seamore, how old are you, by the way, sir?

MAN: Ninety-six.

MAN: Ninety-six years old. Now sir, if you'll whisper your secret to me, I'm sure the folks at home would like to know what it is. Well now to help pacify his secret, I will tell you it concerns something that he witnessed, and Bill Cohen, we'll start with you. Something that he saw. Something he saw happen.

BILL: This thing that Mr. Seamore saw, does it have historical significance?

MAN: Does this have historical significance, Mr. Seamore? I would say yes. Wouldn't you, sir?

MAN: I can't hear him very good..

MAN: Yes, there's quite a distance between our desks here. Let's all speak up, huh?

BILL: Does it have political significance?

MAN: It had political significance at the time.

MAN: Yes.

MAN: Yes.

BILL: Well if you're 96 that would make Mr. Seamore born in 1860.

MAN: Well, Henry, such a mathematician.

BILL: Yes, he's been writing over there all the time. This thing, did it have anything to do with the Civil War, Mr. Seamore?

MAN: No it had not to do with the Civil.. well let's say indirectly it was concerned with the Civil War. All right an answer?

BILL: Did it concern a famous person in American history, very well-known person?

MAN: Did it concern a famous person, Mr. Seamore?

MAN: Yes.

MAN: Yes.

BILL: Would it help me to know who this person was?

MAN: He wants to know if it would help him to know who this person was, and he has to know who that is, yes.

BILL: Did this man hold political office?

MAN: Did this man hold political office, sir? Yes. Twenty dollars done and sixty dollars to go and we go to Jane Meadows.

JANE: Mr. Seamore..

MAN: Henry is being his usual helpful self by whispering to Jane – McKinley.

JANE: And I'm not listening. Mr. Seamore, would this person have ever been president of the United States?

MAN: Was he ever president, this man?

MAN: Oh I think he was once.

JANE: Would it have been Abraham Lincoln?

MAN: It was Abraham Lincoln, yes.

JANE: You witnessed something to do with Abraham Lincoln. Was this a pleasant thing?

MAN: Was it a pleasant thing you saw, sir?

MAN: Not very pleasant, I don't think. I was scared to death, though.

MAN: He said no, he was scared to death.

JANE: Would it have had anything to do with the President Lincoln's death, by any chance?

MAN: Unfortunately, yes.

JANE: Did Mr. Seamore witness the shooting of President Lincoln?

MAN: We found out about Mr. Seamore through a recent article in the American weekly and said 'I saw Lincoln shot,' and this article is by

Samuel J. Seamore, and it goes on to say that Mr. Seamore was five years old at the time. He had been taken to Ford's Theater by some good friends, and the curious thing was that in his youth, five years of age, when he saw Booth jump from the box to the stage at which time he broke his leg. His only concern was not for the President, because he didn't realize that the President had been shot, but the poor man who fell out of the balcony, and that's all of his memory is of going to the theater and seeing a man fall out of the balcony.

Sir, it's been a great joy and you might say an honor. You are, by the way, the only living witness of that tragic event, and we are certainly going to forfeit the complete \$80 to you just for your courage in coming here to see us tonight.

(END OF VIDEO ROLL IN)

BS: Isn't that great? It's such an interesting thing, isn't it, and that's what I mean. So what we all experience when we see an old man talk about witnessing the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, this gets to.. I'm more than halfway done with my sermon, actually, so I'm a bit behind. I promise I'll finish in 13 minutes. But this is the point we get to in the scripture today. I'm talking about when Mary and Joseph had a prophetess bless the baby Jesus.

So the story goes like this that Jesus has to be dedicated as a baby. They bring Him into the temple, which is according to Jewish law, and while He's there, there's multiple interactions. You've heard me talk

about Simeon. That's a part of this story; we're not going to talk about him today. But the person after that is a woman named Anna. Anna is called a prophetess in the Bible, and what I can only assume that means is that it says that when she was married seven years, so she was probably in her 20's, her husband died and after he died, she went to the temple and just never left. And it was like the Holy Spirit would just speak through her.

And so it's been like 60 years, it says, she's been living in the temple and all she does is she eats, she sleeps there, and she just witnesses to people and speaks on their behalf and blesses them and has this kind of charismatic style gift that she practices that the evangelist Luke talks about in his gospel.

And it's here that the young Mary and Joseph; tradition has often said that Joseph was older, but he was more likely about 20, and Mary was probably somewhere between 15 and 18, something like that. And they would have brought the baby Jesus in, and it says that Anna saw Him and it was like she knew this was the Messiah, and then Luke goes out of his way, this is Rembrandt's version of this painting. But I love this, just this beautiful picture that she knows. It's a surprise. This thrill that she's seeing the baby. That the Messiah has finally come.

And Luke goes out of his way to say "and she was 84 years old." Now in the first century, especially when you're on the cusp of the Roman Empire, you are like the luckiest person ever to make it to 84. If

you grade on a curve, the average age would have been, for an average person, in your 50's, your late 50's. But if you include soldiers dying in war, and you include children under 10 that die, the average age drops into the 30's. So you have to just make it as a kid, which is already hard enough, and then you have to not be killed in war, and then you have to not get dysentery or typhoid or malaria or cancer of any or any of the minor things that would never kill someone today that for sure killed everybody back then. And to make it through all of that and to be 84 meant you were one of the precious few people in town that carried some major history in you.

I believe that Luke points out.. now I've always said this – when you study the Bible, if a specific number is given, that means there is intent behind it. The author wants you to hear something. If it said she was very old, then she's very old, fine. But if he says, and he does, she's 84 years old, Luke is trying to get you to think about specifically what she's been through in her life. And everybody who's reading the gospel of Luke in the first and second century, especially in Israel, knows exactly what she has been through in her life. She is probably one of the last people alive that lived in an independent Israel that was conquered by Rome. She lived through that.

Let's talk about this just very briefly because I think this is important for what Anna is about to see in the gospels. Quick review of last week, we talked about Hannukah so the Babylonian exile ends in

538 B.C. when Kourosh or Cyrus conquers Babylonia and Babylon and he frees the Jews and then he sends them back to Israel, Israel becomes a client state. Later Israel is conquered by the Greeks, by Alexander the Great. This is Alexander the Great from one of the best video games ever called Civilization Five. I like these renditions better. It's kind of a little more fun. Alexander looking good; with the greatest military of all time, takes over Israel, and tries to allure people into Hellenism, and it's working.

And then the Seleucids, who are also Greeks, try and force them into it and the revolt begins, and that leads to the Hasmonaean Dynasty, the Maccabean revolt, a guy named Judas Maccabee or Judas the Hammer becomes this great general and leads this incredible war and kicks the Greeks out of Israel. And it's this amazing thing, and because of him, there is an established Israel state. Everyone around Judas Maccabee begins to use this very weighty term from the Old Testament – Messiah. Mashiach. Everybody is like Judas Maccabee. He's the one. He's the one. He's brought us freedom from these Greeks in this.. there's no way we should have won this war, and this guy did it. They give him this name – the Hammer, the Hammer. He led us to this victory.

And then, he dies in battle. And they go huh. Okay, well. So in the Hasmonaean state, which lasted about a hundred years, there are seven kings and they were all bad. No, they weren't all bad, the first two are

pretty good, but they get worse and worse, which seems to be a theme in Israel. They get like Henry the 8th bad by the end.

So of course Judas is this great guy, Judas Maccabeus. They think he's the Messiah but then he dies. And then the guy who comes after him, Jonathan, if Judas Maccabee is George Washington, Jonathan is like John Adams or something, just this statesman. He establishes Jewish independence. And then he dies. And then it really gets bad. There's a guy named Simon Hasmonaeus, and ironically Simon Hasmonaeus loves Greek Hellenistic stuff, so he starts bringing it back. He starts persecuting rabbis and Jewish leaders. And he does this thing where he makes himself king and priest, and by doing that, he is flat out telling everybody I, I Simon am the Messiah. I'm the guy.

And then guess what? He gets assassinated. And the guy who's related to the guy who assassinates him, John Hyrcanus takes over and he's like I am the Messiah! He wasn't, I am the Messiah. And John Hyrcanus conquers much of what's called Idumea and Samaria. Next week we're going to talk about Herod coming from Idumea. But he forces people in these regions to convert to Judaism, which is crazy and not at all anything the Jews would ever do, and yet he does this and he calls himself Messiah, right?

And then he's killed and he's replaced by another guy who says I am the Messiah! Aristobulus. Aristobulus lives one year and then he dies. Probably poisoned and killed, too. And the guy who replaces him,

Alexander Jannaeus, who persecuted rabbis like crazy, said he was the Messiah, and so seven kings in a row have these just massive egos, and they all think they're Messiah. This is what I'm getting at. They all want to say I am the king priest that was prophesied about that was to come in the golden age of Israel and the peace, the shalom of the world is going to come through me and then they get assassinated.

It finally comes down to the last guy, John Hyrcanus the second, and he's sitting on the throne as the king priest, and his little brother decides that actually John Hyrcanus the second is the Messiah, but I Aristobulus, I'm the Messiah, and so he kicks him out of Jerusalem. John Hyrcanus doesn't like this one bit, wants to get his throne back, and so he reaches out to a gentleman you may know - Pompey the Great.

Now at this time, this is Pompey the Great. This is an artist's reenactment from another video game called Assassins Creed. It's a very good game. But this is actually an artist's historian rendition based off of the bust of Pompey. This is exactly what Pompey probably looked.. this is what he looked like if the bust is true. Isn't that interesting? Kind of looks like my friend Pallergio from high school, just to be honest with you. He looks a little less.. anyway.

So this is Pompey the Great. And by this time, Israel is a Roman sandwich. It's an independent state, but Syria and Turkey above is all Rome, and Egypt all below is Rome, and then there's like this highway

that the Romans want that would circle out this part of the Mediterranean.

And this guy John Hyrcanus wants his throne back so he has a cup of coffee with Pompey, and he says hey Pompey, if you take back Israel and just make me high priest, Israel is yours. Pompey says a deal is a deal. He sieges Rome. It takes him three months and when he attacks Rome.. now I didn't have time to read Jucifous to actually see the account of what it was like in the siege of Rome, but if it's like anything else in that era, I promise you there was murder, rape, theft, pillaging, 12,000 Jews died when this happened. Pompey took the city, made the clown who called himself Messiah, made him a high priest, technically, but stripped him of all of his power. And this is how Rome became occupied, or how Jerusalem and Israel became occupied by Rome.

Anna was 18 years old when this happened. There are probably very few people who lived in Jerusalem that had been in Israel when this happened, but Anna, the 18-year-old was there when Roman soldiers came over the wall and ran through the streets and ran into people's houses and grabbed people and grabbed stuff. She was there. We don't know what she saw. It doesn't tell us, but we know she was there. We know that she knew that there were seven men who all claimed Messiahship, who's egos led to all sorts of infighting and theft and evil and horrible stuff, and she lived through all of that, and now here she is an old lady, 84-years-old, just living in the temple, prophesying, and she

sees Jesus, and the Lord speaks to her. She knows. That's Him. I love to think that maybe she laughed a little bit. She's like of course, that's Him. That's Him.

This, what Hannah read earlier, comes to mind – a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. I mean picture this stump which has been cut down, something good's going to come out of it. "From his roots a branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding. Spirit of counsel and of might. Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and a little child will lead them." There he was, the Prince of Peace had come.

Well as I finish this sermon, I just want to say on this peace Sunday, I think so much of peace comes, and let me just say this, it really comes from three things. But the main one is it comes from knowledge and knowledge comes from age and experience. Peace comes from knowledge.

But when you can't know an event, and there aren't enough books in the world to give you the information that you need, sometimes it's good enough to know a person. That the faithfulness of a person is much better than the faithfulness of an event. You can trust in the Lord. And that is where discipleship comes from; that is where peace comes from for a disciple. It comes from knowing the Lord. That even when we're

going through tough times, maybe you've been laid off or furloughed recently, or got a bad health scare, or something you're worried about, even if you have bad news now, the gospel is always good news. And the gospel, I believe, shows us that the best is yet to come for those who entrust their lives to Jesus Christ. If you know the Lord, you know that He's faithful.

So peace comes from knowledge. Peace comes from priorities. I feel so bad in particular for many of those young people I talked about who are being idolized because young people today are given all of this pressure. It's like everybody has to be famous and rich or something. I feel particularly bad for young moms. I feel like the message young moms are getting today is you not only have to raise great children, you have to like look pretty all the time and post pictures on Instagram, and you should probably write a novel, and like be a CEO, and have an incredible marriage. I just feel like what is the priority? There are so many people, especially young people today, they're not hearing live an honorable life. Like prioritize your life in a way that when you finish it, you can look back and be proud of the way you lived. There is just too much, and it's hard for young people because they haven't learned how to honor their elders from any of them. It's hard for them to understand what really matters. They're naturally looking to their peers, and that's confusing and its crazy. The priority is the kingdom of God. You love the Lord and

you love your family and you live an honorable life. And if you do that, everything else is secondary. It doesn't matter.

So peace comes from priorities. And lack of priorities leads to confusion, utter confusion and being torn in a million directions.

And finally, peace comes from stretching. The word of God affirms that, as well. Jesus tells His disciples in Luke chapter 10 and 11, go out with authority and preach and go into all these different villages, and don't bring anything with you. Not money, not extra change of clothes, no food, anything. And I'm just going to provide for you. That had to be hard for these guys, but when they came back, He said when I sent you out, did you lack anything? And they said nothing, Lord! Think there's something about these events in life when we're stretched that it's an opportunity to actually gain peace. Not during the time; they probably weren't at peace when they were hungry and there was nobody around to give them food. But later, after they had those stories, had the experience, they also had a peace, and that is the gift that comes with stretching and coming through the other side.

Friends, more than anything, I just want you to know that you can be at peace. You serve a good God, and our stories can be difficult at times, and when we're in the middle of something, it can be hard to have peace, but let me bring an affirmation for you. I just believe we serve the kind of God that when we lose a job, it means a better one is coming.

When we have a health scare that very often we spend more time

worrying about the health thing and we lose so much of what's around us. And I just believe that God's got a good thing coming in your life and so much of life is remembering to trust that whatever happens in life, God is good and He can always carry us through. God's going to carry you through whatever you're going through, and I'm praying with you and I'm believing for you and in you.

Lord, we ask in Jesus' name, first that you'd forgive us of our sins, and you'd renew us and that we would be at peace with you. But second, God, I pray for a sense of peace in our hearts about our country, about our families, about our walk with you. So many people worry and wonder if they're really saved. Lord, we thank you God that you do the saving. It's not based on our works but it's based on your good grace and your love towards us, and that we wouldn't worry about those things. We wouldn't worry about tomorrow, but that just every day we would do the next right thing and seek after your kingdom and trust, Lord, that you're better at fixing these things than we are, and that you're working on it, and so we trust you Lord and we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.