

## What I know now

A sermon by the Reverend Robert Bruce Edson in Saint John's Episcopal Church, Franklin, Massachusetts, on the Third Sunday after Pentecost and Father's Day, June 21, 2009.

*See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!*

2 Corinthians 6:2

Today is Father's Day and when I look back on the years when we were raising children I have to say I miss it. Today would have been our fortieth wedding anniversary and I think of how those years of marriage and parenting went by so quickly. We raised our children on a basic formula of love, common sense, patience and prayer. We gave them plenty of room to grow, nourished them with good values and the rest was up to them. I often hear people say that you don't know what you are getting in adopting a child, but the truth is that you don't know what you are getting in your own biological children and for that matter you don't what you're getting in yourself. People spend a fortune working for years with a therapist to find out who they are.

It is a delight to see children grow and develop their own individual identities. While it is our job as parents to teach them the values we hold, we can't expect that they will adopt our values. Because they are their own persons, they learn to think for themselves as they make their way in life. When children are ready to get out on their own, it means that we've done our job as parents. It is as when I taught them to ride a two wheeler. I held on to the seat and gave them a push and off they went on their own. When they are out on their own, we can't take credit for their successes nor should we take blame for their failures.

Each generation of children thinks parents are hopelessly out of touch. Growing up before the advent of the information age we did not have calculators, computers, internet, Google, E-mail, cell phones, I phones, facebook, myspace, Ipods, texting, twitter, blackberries, tivo, Netflix, DVD's, CD's, HDTV's, ATM's, or GPS's. All we had were radios, hi fi's, telegraphs, telephones, typewriters, television and a turquoise Chevy. To look at school parking lots today, it seems most high school students have their own cars to drive to school.

When children challenge our assumptions and question nearly everything, it is a necessary part of their development. They need to learn to assert their own thinking. The process does leave you feeling like you are the bones on which your children are cutting their teeth. Someone once described raising a teenager as wrestling with an angel who is greased and stoned who keeps turning into a turkey buzzard. But then we remember that we were probably much the same way and our parents still loved us in spite of it all.

I will be attending my 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion next week and I can't help but wonder what the world will be like in the year 2059. Will we have finally discovered life on other planets? Will we have discovered a cure for cancer and AIDS? Will there be computers linked to the human brain that operate on thought waves transmitted over cyberspace? Will we have learned to settle international disputes without resorting to war? Because we will be teleported everywhere we won't need those street signs at major intersections that aren't there. I am confident that today's younger generation will be able to adapt to the same rapid pace of change as we have.

A recent article in *Newsweek* magazine tells us that life expectancy for men is now 75.2 years and for women it is 80.4 years. It says that you add years to your life by going to church regularly, taking a daily dose of aspirin, eating fruits and vegetables and flossing. The curious

statistic is that being married adds five years to a man's life, but being married doesn't add anything to a woman's life span. This proves my theory that 67.2 percent of all statistics are inaccurate.

Faith is what helps us move ahead bravely into the challenges with which we are confronted. In the scriptures today we read that Job loses his home, his cattle and his children and his well meaning friends suggest that it's all his fault because of his sin. He refuses to accept that and believes that he is basically a good person and that all will be redeemed. St. Paul writes of how he endured great hardship and tribulation as a missionary. Jesus calms the fears of the disciples while out on the stormy sea. When our nation was plunged into the depths of the Great Depression, the American people did not give in to the forces of fear and self-doubt. They survived two world wars in the last century with everyone doing their part to win the war. With faith in who they were and what they had to do, our nation endured.

I was bred on the belief that all people, regardless of condition, should have an equal opportunity for education, jobs and housing. I remember being told that I was young and idealistic and that such things take time. No one should put you down for being young and idealistic. There is a growing trend for high school graduates to take a gap year before going on to college. I recently met up with one who graduated last year who spent the last year working among the poor in Bolivia. As a result, he now has a clearer idea of what he wants to do with his life. The world needs those with talent, ability and idealism with a vision for the possibilities of the future.

While it is never easy to raise children, I have always believed the most important thing that a father can do for his children is to love their mother. We never cease being parents and they never cease being our children. If there is anything we have to pass on to our children it is what we have learned about life. We can share our faith and what we have experienced and learned about human relationships and provide the opportunity for them to express doubts, questions and ideas.

I believe that both my wife, Diane and my children, David and Sarah were direct gifts from God. I want to pass on to them a better, safer world than the one I inherited. The best we can give to our children is the gift of ourselves by being there for them. It makes my day when I hear on the phone, "Hi, Dad!"