

Rhythm of Life

The Challenges of Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Senior Adulthood

DESCRIPTION

This four week series explores the challenges we can expect during the four major stages of life: childhood, adolescence, adulthood and senior adulthood. The messages are based on episodes from the life of David. King David is a good source for this theme, because the Bible covers events from his entire life—including his childhood, adolescence, adulthood and senior adulthood. The idea for this series and much of the content comes from a little book written decades ago by John Claypool called *Stages*, and I want to fully acknowledge and credit his work, just as I did when I preached these sermons at my last church. Although these four sermons are certainly not exhaustive statements about the four major stages of life, they do review a few of the growth challenges each stage brings—and they give us some biblical guidance on how we can meet those challenges.

1. The Challenges of Childhood: (1 Samuel 16:1, 6-13)
2. The Challenges of Adolescence: (1 Samuel 17:32-40)
3. The Challenges of Adulthood: (Psalm 51)
4. The Challenges of Senior Adulthood: (1 Chronicles 29:10-13, 26-28)

Rhythm of Life

Part 1 - The Challenges of Childhood (1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-13)

(NOTE: throughout these sermons you will see projection notes that I sent to our media team).

[Slide of newborn child] Two of the most profound moments of my life were the birth of my two children. Both of them are now grown and married. However, raising two children does not make me an expert in child development. I can relate to the pastor who, when he was young and had no children, wrote a sermon called “*How to Raise Children.*” A few years later, he and his wife had a son. Two years later, they had twin girls. He went back and changed his sermon from “*How to Raise Children*” to “*Some Suggestions for Raising Children.*” When his children became teenagers he changed the sermon to, “*Helpful Hints from a Fellow Struggler.*” Raising kids is a hard job! There is no easy, simplistic formula for pulling it off. But if you listen to the experts in child development, and, if you listen to the Bible, you will learn that during childhood at least two major challenges need to be met, and we’ll review them today. You can find them printed in your listening guide in the bulletin. ***(Listening guide can be found at the end of this sermon)***

The first challenge is ***[Slide: Challenge One: Providing a Child’s Need for Affirmation. (Under that put this verse) “The Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him.” (1 Samuel 16: 12-13) (Place an image in the background or on a corner of the screen of a parent hugging their child)]*** When children come into the world, they need to know they have worth, that they are valued. They need to be affirmed by the people around them.

Perhaps you have heard of the author Sam Keene. Right before his father died, Sam visited with him. During that visit Sam thanked his father for doing such a good job as a parent. He said, ***[Slide: “Across the years, you have given us the best single gift that any parent could give—you took delight in us. In all sorts of ways you let us know that you were glad we were here, that we had value in your eyes, that our presence was a joy and not a burden to you.” Sam Keene]*** What a wonderful gift to give a child—to take delight in them!

God did that with his son Jesus. At Jesus' baptism, God said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Children need that gift. Children need affirmation. They need to know they are valued and loved.

David got that kind of affirmation. ***[Slide: back to previous slide: Challenge One: Providing a Child's Need for Affirmation ...]*** In today's text, the prophet Samuel affirmed that David had been chosen by God to be the future king of Israel. Samuel affirmed that David was a special child, and he anointed David. In doing so he said, this child matters, this child is important, this child has worth, and this child has great value. All children, not just future kings, need that kind of affirmation. And you and I can be a Samuel to the children around us. Like Samuel, we can bless and affirm the children in our life including our own children, our grandchildren, and our nieces and nephews. But we can also affirm the children of our friends, the children in our neighborhood, and the children in our church. We need to give them the great gift of affirmation which is so crucial to their well-being. There are a million different ways to affirm children. Let me give you one tiny snapshot of what that looks like.

A young family invited the new preacher and his wife over for Sunday dinner. The mother of the family wanted it to be a perfect affair. She drilled the children days in advance about proper behavior. Finally, when the day came and the meal was cooked, everyone sat at the dining room. The table was set with a white lace table cloth, with the good china, silverware, and a beautiful centerpiece. They all sat down and had the blessing. When the blessing was over, the little five year old daughter reached for her glass of iced tea and knocked it over. The little brother jumped out of the way and knocked his tea over too. There was an awkward moment of silence as everyone looked at the mother, realizing how disappointed she was. She had gone to such trouble, she wanted everything to be perfect, and now there was this huge mess and stain on the white lace tablecloth. The little girl was just about to start crying, for she had messed up everything. However, just then, the father flipped over his glass of tea and started to laugh. The preacher caught on and flipped over his tea and started to laugh. The preacher's wife flipped over her tea and laughed. Everyone looked to the mother. Finally, a big smile came to her face. She picked up her glass and dumped it out in the middle of the table and everyone just roared with laughter. At that moment, the father and his five year old daughter looked at each other. The father winked at her, and she winked back, full of gratitude that he saved her from a terribly embarrassing moment. That's what kids need. Even when

they mess up, they need to know that they are still beloved and valued and affirmed and have great worth. Children need affirmation.

Let's now look at the second great challenge of childhood, **[Challenge Two: Providing a Child's Need for Expectation. (Under that put this verse: "Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." (1 Samuel 16: 11) (Add an image that fit this theme, perhaps a child raking leaves with one or both of his parents, or a child feeding his pet).]** Children absolutely need to be affirmed. But they also need to know we have expectations of them. I'm not talking about oppressive expectations, like you always have to make the honor roll, or be a star football player, or win the beauty contest, or you have to be a doctor or lawyer just like your mother or your father. No, I'm talking about healthy expectations. Children need to know they are part of a family, part of a community, part of a church, part of a nation, and therefore they have responsibilities.

They need to know we expect them to do their part, to do their best, to reach their potential, to be all they can be. We expect them to do their chores, to do their homework, to care for others, to obey the rules, to serve in their church, and to be a responsible citizen. They need to know they have much to offer the world, and that we expect them to live up to their potential. They need to know they are gifted by God and that God expects them to use their gifts for good. Children need lots of affirmation, but they also need expectation. If not, they will turn out self-absorbed, thinking the whole world revolves around them. So it's crucial that they get both affirmation and expectation.

That was the case for David. We see that in verse 11 in your listening guide. Although he was still a child, he already had family responsibilities. One of his jobs was to help tend the sheep. David was a part of the family, and they expected him to do his part. And as he grew older, the expectations grew stronger. David had incredible gifts, and the people around him expected him to use those gifts for the good of others. And that kind of healthy expectation had a profound impact on David, and helped him become a marvelous human being. He was affirmed. But he was also expected to live out his potential, to be a responsible person, to give back to the world, to do his part. And it all started by helping to tend the family sheep when he was just a boy.

I remember an incident with my son many years ago, when he was in 6th or 7th grade. I asked him to take out the trash. “OK Pop, I’ll do it in a little while.” Well, you know what that means. Hours later I said, “Jonathan, I want you to take out the trash.” “OK Pop, I’ll do it in a minute.” Well a minute passed, and then about a 100 more minutes. Finally, I was fed up. I got the trash bag, tied it up, went into his bedroom where he was reading, and set the trash bag on his floor. I said, “Jonathan, take out the trash—now.” He was irritated and said, “Why do I have to take out the trash anyway?” I wanted to say, “Because I said so!” But instead I said, “Because you are a part of this family, and you have to do your part, just like everyone else.” I thought he was going to argue some more, but he looked at the trash sack lying in the middle of his bedroom, then looked at me, and we both started to laugh—hard! Finally, he said, “OK Pop, I’ll take out the trash—now.” And he did. That’s a very tiny example, but kids need to have some expectations put on them. They need to be encouraged to do their part, to be a responsible citizen, to use their gifts to help others, to give back to society and not just take. Well, children need affirmation. But children also need expectation. **[END SLIDE]**

I know child rearing is not easy nor is it simple. Many of you have heard the corny old story about a woman boarding a bus with five children in tow. The bus driver said, “Are all these children yours, or is this a picnic?” She said, “They’re all mine, and believe me, it’s no picnic.” Raising children is no picnic. But if we will give the children in our life the twin foundations of affirmation and expectation, it’s likely they will turn out to be fine human beings. David was blessed by both affirmation and expectation, and a magnificent life was built on those two foundations. Let us learn from his example, and go and do likewise.

LISTENING GUIDE

Challenge One: Providing a Child’s Need For _____

“The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.” (1 Samuel 16:12-13)

Challenge Two: Providing a Child’s Need For _____

“Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him.” (1 Samuel 16: 11)

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Rhythm of Life
Part 2 - The Challenges of Adolescence
1 Samuel 17: 32-40

A married couple decided to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary in a big way. They took a two week vacation to Greece **[Slide: beautiful photo of Greece]** and it was absolutely wonderful. However, they felt a bit guilty about leaving their 17 year old son home with his grandparents. So they send him a text. When he received it, he wasn't exactly sure how to interpret the message. It said, **[Slide: make it look like a text message: We are standing above the cliffs where the ancient Spartan women once hurled their defective children to their death on the rocks below. Wish you were here!]** That's an ambiguous message!

We are currently in a series called "Rhythm of Life." **[END SLIDE]** Today we are looking at the challenges of adolescence. Adolescence is the transition period from the dependency of childhood to the independence of adulthood. It begins around junior high school and can last through the college years, spanning a decade or more. It's an in-between time. An adolescent is not a child, yet he or she is not yet an adult. And that transition time between childhood and adulthood is chocked full of pressures and conflicts. Adolescence is a challenging time, both for the adolescent, and for the adults in their life. Today we will review two major challenges of adolescence, and then look at a Bible story that sheds some helpful light on the topic.

First, let's talk about the **[Slide (put at top of screen) 1. The Adult's Challenge (add background image of a teenager or several of them)]** You can follow along on your listening guide. (Listening guide can be found at the end of this sermon). The primary challenge for parents and other involved adults is to **[Add to the slide: Let loose without completely letting go.]**

During adolescence, parents need to step back some and give our children some space. They need for us to stop hovering over them like a helicopter. There was a time when they needed us to be involved in every detail of their life. But during adolescence, they need some distance, they need some breathing room, they need some room to grow. That doesn't mean we completely pull out. They don't need total distance from us. We still need to be there for support and counsel. But we need to step back some, let loose a bit, and quit breathing down

their necks. As our children get older, we need to give them the freedom to begin choosing their own values, beliefs and convictions, their own politics, their own career choices, and even their own religion. We can and should lay a foundation for their faith. But eventually, it has to become their faith, not ours. So, our job is to slowly let loose of our children, to slowly relinquish control, without abandoning them. And that's not easy to do. But for them to become adults, it must be done. So, the primary challenge for parents is: letting loose without letting completely go.

Let's now look at the **[Slide (put at top of screen with same background image) 2. The Adolescent's Challenge]** The primary challenge for adolescents is to **[Add to screen: Walk forward without completely walking away.]** During adolescence, young people must accept more responsibility for their life and their decisions. They have to make choices about who they are, what their values will be, and what direction their life will take. In short, they must walk forward into adulthood as their own person. To be sure, they must not walk completely away. They still need to be connected to their family. But it's crucial that they gain their independence. Not all at once, and not too soon. But eventually, they must walk forward on their own. As painful as it can be, every young adult must finally claim autonomy from their parents. So, the challenge for adolescents is to walk forward in life as an independent person, but not to walk away from their family altogether, and that's a difficult balancing act to be sure.

All of which brings me to today's scripture text. **[Slide: art work of David and Goliath story]** These two great challenges of adolescence—adults letting loose and adolescents walking forward—are vividly portrayed in today's text. 1 Samuel 17 tells the famous story of David and Goliath, which takes place during David's adolescence. In the story, the army of Israel is being taunted by a giant of a man named Goliath. Nobody had the courage to fight the giant. When David arrives on the scene, he, full of adolescence idealism, offers to fight Goliath. But King Saul says to David, "You can't fight Goliath, you are just a child." But David was not just a child. He tells the king, "I'm more grown up than you think. I've fought wild lions and bears, and I can fight this man." It wasn't easy to acknowledge, but Saul finally realized that David was right. David wasn't a child anymore. In fact, David was probably about 18 years old at the time. It was time for Saul to turn David loose and let him face the giant on his own. So finally Saul says to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you."

At first Saul tried to make David wear Saul's armor, but it didn't work for David. Instead, David

had to choose his own armor, just as our children must do. So David took his sling and five stones, and went out to fight the giant. It's hard to say who had the harder assignment—David who had to walk forward and face Goliath—or Saul, who had to let loose of David and watch him go into battle. Adolescence is a scary time. But there's no way around it. **[END SLIDE]**

This old story serves as a model for dealing with adolescence. On the one hand, David had the courage to take responsibility for his own life and walk forward into life's battles. On the other hand, Saul had the courage to let loose of David and let him go. Of course, in real life, this doesn't happen all at once. In fact, it takes years. But over time, adults must learn to let loose without completely letting go, and adolescents must learn to walk forward without completely walking away. The process is hard, but necessary. And yet—the end result—a child eventually becoming an adult—is a wonderful thing, even if it's painful along the way.

Years ago, my daughter Laura was getting ready to go to college. The last few days before she left, I tried to give her all my last advice. Study hard. Eat healthy. Get enough sleep. Make good friends. Find a church—preferably Methodist. Call home often. Stay away from boys! You know the script. Finally, the day came for her to leave. We packed her car and the time came to go. My last words to her were, “You just be who you are, and you will do fine.” We hugged, and cried, and she drove away to start college. I watched her drive out of the driveway and down the street, and then she was gone. I cried for a while. Then I made the mistake of walking to her bedroom and cried some more. But it was a good cry. I felt good inside. Paula and I had raised her the best we could. We had loved her and affirmed her. We had grounded her in good values and faith in God. And now it was time to let her go. Now it was her time to walk forward into life and face the giants on her own. She knew her mother and I were still here, and that she could come back when she needed us. But she also knew she was walking forward as an adult, and things would never be same again. And even though I cried, I also smiled, and I thanked God for the great gift and mystery of life.

I once heard about a business man who was traveling out of town. He came upon a unique construction sign. ***It said, [Slide (if possible make this look like a highway construction sign) Construction Ahead, Prepare for Aggravation.]*** Well, adolescence is a time of construction. So, we had better be prepared for some aggravation. But through all that aggravation, God is at work, constructing a child into an adult, and that, ultimately, is a beautiful thing. So may God give us courage, like he did for Saul and David long ago, to face

the challenges of adolescence. And whether we are a parent or an adolescent, may God help us to GROW ON THROUGH.

1. The Adult's Challenge:

Let _____ Without Letting _____

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you." (1 Samuel 17:32-37)

2. The Adolescent's Challenge:

Walk _____ Without Walking _____

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:38-40)

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The Rhythm of Life
Part 3 - The Challenges of Adulthood
Psalm 51

Have you ever noticed that fairy tales all end the same way? After battles have been fought, dragons slain, and curses broken, the hero and heroine ride off into the sunset and live “happily ever after.” **[Slide: fairy tale couple, perhaps Cinderella and Prince Charming, with the following caption in old fashioned looking font: “And they lived happily ever after.”]** Wouldn’t that be convenient? Wouldn’t adulthood be nice if all we had to do was get our education, choose a vocation, select a mate, and then settle down and live happily ever after? Unfortunately, that only happens in fairy tales. In real life, it’s a lot more complicated.

We are currently in a series called ***Rhythm of Life***. Using episodes from the life of David, we have been exploring the four major stages of life. Today, we are going to deal with the challenges of adulthood. Of all four stages of life, adulthood is the longest. It begins around our mid to late 20s and lasts until we shift into senior adulthood at least four decades later. The challenges of adulthood are many. But for today, I want to focus on only one challenge. The reason I’ve chosen just one is because it’s so hard to get it right. Please turn to your listening guide and we’ll get started. **(Listening guide can be found at the end of this sermon).**

[Slide: image of Olympic gymnast on the balancing beam with this caption: The primary challenge in adulthood is to MAINTAIN BALANCE.] Balance between work, family, friendships, faith, church, community service, and on and on. I don’t know about you, but maintaining balance has been THE major challenge of my adult life. Because it takes so much effort to maintain balance, the great temptation is to become unbalanced. For example, it’s easy to give almost all our energies to our career, and neglect the others areas of our life, especially our relationships.

I once heard about a hard driving, powerful CEO of a Fortune 500 company. At a company meeting, he got up and gave a speech. He said, “I know many of you here today want my job, and I’m going to tell you how to get it.” All the young executives leaned forward, eager to catch his every word. The CEO went on to say, “My daughter got married this past weekend.

At her wedding, I suddenly realized that I didn't know anything about her. I have never been actively involved in her life. I have never seriously talked to her about her ideas, her dreams, or her hopes. In short, I missed out on building a relationship with my daughter. That's the price I paid for this job. If you want to pay that price, you can have it."

Maintaining balance between our professional lives and our personal lives is extremely challenging. Even David, marvelous person that he was, had a mixed record when it came to maintaining balance in his life. Look with me for a moment at today's listening guide in your bulletin. Notice first that **[Slide: same Olympic image as a background image: 1. David succeeded professionally. (Under this line put the following text:) "David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years ... David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people." (2 Samuel 5:4, 8:15)]**

David succeeded as a great military leader, and then he succeeded as a politician. At the young age of 30, David became King of Israel. He reigned for 40 years, and he did a splendid job. In fact, David was the greatest King Israel ever had. David succeeded professionally in a phenomenal way.

Unfortunately, we can't say the same thing about the other areas of his life. Although David succeeded professionally **[Slide: same Olympic image as above: 2. David failed relationally. (Under this line put the following text:) "Oh my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!" (1 Samuel 18:33)]**

David had many wives but no significant relationship with one woman. And, he had poor relationships with most of his children. I've listed just one example—his son Absalom. Absalom turned on his father, tried to take over David's throne, and was killed in battle during his attempted coup. When David learned that Absalom was dead, he cried out in grief, not only for the death of his son, but also for their broken relationship.

Well, David succeeded professionally, but he failed relationally. Finally **[Slide: same Olympic image: 3. David had a mixed record personally. (Under this line put the following two texts, with a space between them) "... Who is skillful in music, a man of valor, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the Lord is with him." (1 Samuel 16:18) (Add a space between the previous text and this next one) "Nathan said to David**

... Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own ... Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." (2 Samuel 12:9, 13)]

By personally, I mean internal values, integrity, ethics, and spiritual life. On the one hand, David had strong personal qualities, as seen here in 1 Samuel 16. But on the other hand, at times, David failed miserably in his personal life, both ethically and spiritually. The most vivid example is David's affair with Bathsheba and the horrible aftermath of deceit, cover-up, and even murder, as seen in this text in 2 Samuel 12. So David, at best, did a fair job of maintaining balance in his life. He excelled professionally, he did poorly relationally, and had a mixed record personally. **[END SLIDE]**

I'd like to tell you today that maintaining balance professionally, relationally and personally is easy. But of course that's only true in fairy tales—not in real life. In real life we have to constantly struggle to keep our life in balance. **[Slide: image of balance beam but with no person on it]** And I don't have an easy formula for pulling this off. It takes commitment, internationality, and discipline. In short, it's hard work. But David does give us some help in this area. After he got his life completely out of balance, after he blew it in so many ways, he realized his failure, admitted it to God, and he pleaded for forgiveness. We read about that earlier in Psalm 51. **[Add to slide: "Have mercy on me, O God ... cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51)]**

After David confessed his failures, God forgave David, and David became more balanced in the years ahead. Not perfect, but better. So, if our life today is out of balance, there is real hope for us. Like David, we need to confess our failure to maintain a balanced life, find forgiveness from God, and with God's help, do better in the days ahead. It can be done. We can become more balanced. **[END SLIDE]**

I'd like to tell you about a man who did so. The man's name is Gary. Gary started his adult life pretty well. He worked hard on the job, but he also gave equal energy to maintaining his marriage and his spiritual life. Eventually, they had a child, a daughter. All in all, Gary did a good job of balancing his professional, relational, and personal commitments.

But before long, Gary got out of balance. His career began to skyrocket, and he became consumed with career success. He worked 80 hours a week, climbing the corporate ladder.

His marriage suffered, he spent little time with his daughter, and he quit going to church. After a couple of years, he was well rewarded for his workaholic ways. He became Vice President of a huge chemical company with hopes of becoming president. Gary did everything he could to advance his career. He continued to work long hours, but he neglected his wife, his daughter, and his soul. Gary's only passion in life was becoming president of his company, and he was on track to do so.

But then everything changed. His wife got breast cancer. All of a sudden, everything looked different. Gary realized that career success was not ultimate. He realized that relationships mattered most, with his wife, his daughter, and with God. The next year was hard, but Gary's wife made a full recovery. And in the process, Gary's life became more balanced. He stopped giving his entire life to his job, reconnected to his wife and daughter, and to God.

Fifteen years have passed since Gary's wife got sick. She is still doing fine. Their marriage is strong, and Gary has a great relationship with his grown daughter who recently graduated from college. Gary is active in his church again. In fact, he leads a young men's support group. Gary is a strong mentor to them, helping them to be balanced in their life, and this group is one of the most important parts of his life.

Gary is still at the same chemical plant, and he's still the VP, and he's doing an excellent job. But it's pretty clear he's never going to make president. After he quit giving his life and soul to the company, they groomed another man for president and hired him a year later. About seven years ago, Gary got a great offer to move out west and be president of another chemical company. But Gary, older and wiser and more balanced, didn't want to uproot his daughter during high school, he didn't want to leave his church and friends, and he didn't want to hurt his wife's career. So he turned the job down, and remained where he was as Vice President. Gary is in his mid-fifties now. In all likelihood, when Gary retires from his company in about ten years, he will still be a Vice President. It's not all he had hoped for and dreamed about twenty years earlier. If you add it all up, Gary is not exactly living "happily ever after." But, it's pretty close. In fact, according to Gary, it's pretty close enough.

LISTENING GUIDE
THE PRIMARY CHALLENGE OF ADULTHOOD:

TO _____

1. *David succeeded* _____

“David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years ... David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.” (2 Samuel 5:4, 8:15)

2. *David failed* _____

“Oh my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!” (1 Samuel 18:33)

3. *David had a mixed record* _____

“... who is skillful in music, a man of valor, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the Lord is with him.” (1 Samuel 16:18)

“Nathan said to David ... Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own ... Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” (2 Samuel 12:9, 13)

The Rhythm of Life
Part 4 - The Challenges of Senior Adulthood
1 Chron. 29: 10-13, 26-28

A woman, in her 60s, was married to a well-known archeologist. **[Slide: photo of pleasant looking mid to late 60's woman]** Her husband studied ancient ruins all around the globe. A friend once asked this woman, “What’s it like being married to an archeologist?” The woman replied, **[Slide, add caption to photo: “It’s wonderful. The older I get, the more interested he is in me!”]**

Today concludes a series of sermons called, **“Rhythm of Life.”** Using the life of David as a backdrop, we have been exploring the four major stages of life. Today we will examine the challenges of senior adulthood. Even if we are not a senior adult yet, we have loved ones who are. And eventually, if we don’t die young, we will all become senior adults. So today’s message should relate to everyone here. Today we will look at three major challenges of senior adulthood, and see what the Christian faith has to offer us as we face those challenges. Once again, as I have noted throughout this series, I am grateful to John Claypool for his insights which have guided this sermon series. **(Note:** I gave Claypool credit all four weeks either before or during the sermons for his little book *Stages*, and noted that I used his book as my primary resource in this particular series).

Once again, we begin with the life of David. **[Slide: sculpture of King David, Michelangelo’s famous one, from the waist up, or his torso and head, or head only.]** In today’s text from 1 Chronicles 29, David gave the final speech of his reign, praising and thanking God. Then he turned over his Kingdom to his son Solomon. Soon thereafter, David died. The text concludes, **[Slide: add this caption to the sculpture of David: “David died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor.” 1 Chron. 29)]** David certainly wasn’t perfect, as we saw last week. However, David did manage to do well during his senior adult years. For that to happen in our lives, we need to successfully meet at least three challenges of senior adulthood. Please turn to your listening guide, and we’ll quickly review them. **(Listening guide can be found at the end of this sermon).**

The first challenge of senior adulthood is **[Slide: 1. Achieving a Positive Perspective about Our Worth]** The issue of personal worth, value and self-esteem is important throughout our

life. However, if we are not careful, feelings of personal worth can diminish during our senior years. Why? Because our culture falsely tells us that our personal worth is based on what we **do**. By and large, Americans believe that personal worth comes from our work and our achievements and our productivity. And that can be a problem for senior adults. Because during the senior years, most people begin to shift from **doing to being**. In our latter years, most of us don't work and produce and achieve as much as we did when we were younger. However, for a Christian believer, the shift from being to doing does not create a crisis of self-worth. Why? Because we believe in **[Add to slide, with a bullet in front of it (see bottom of sermon for how this lays out): A Christian Theology of Grace]**

Our worth is not based on our own works, but on the grace of God. The Gospel tells us that our personal worth and value is not determined by what we do—but who we are. And we are children of God, created in God's image, with incredible worth and value. And aging does not diminish our value one iota. That's what Paul is affirming in this text from I Cor. 15. Read with me, **[Add to slide: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain." (1 Cor. 15:10)]**

Some time ago, I went to a pastor's conference. During one session we were all given a piece of paper. At the top it said, "Describe yourself on the lines below." Under that were lines that said, "I am" (with several blank lines). After filling out the sheet, we shared what we had written. I found it most interesting that the younger clergy tended to list things that they **did**. "I am a preacher, I am a teacher, I am a leader." But the older clergy, including several retired clergy, had a different list. Instead of listing what they **did**, they tended to list who they **were**. They wrote, "I am a child of God, I am a friend, I am a husband or wife or parent." The older clergy had learned an important Gospel lesson. They learned that self-worth comes not from what we **do**, but from who we **are**. And who are we? We are sons and daughters of God with great worth and value. Well, the first challenge of senior adulthood is—affirming our worth.

The second challenge of senior adulthood is **[Slide: 2. Achieving a Positive Perspective about Our Life]** Experts in aging tell us that one of the primary tasks of senior adulthood is to do a life review. In the evening stage of life, we take stock, look back, and evaluate what we've done. For some people, this leads to despair. They worry they made the wrong choices, that they wasted their lives. But Christian believers do not need to fall prey to that kind of despair. Why? Because we believe in **[Add to slide with bullet in front of it: A Christian theology of Providence]**

Providence says, God has been working in my life throughout the years—in good times and bad times, in successes and in failures. That’s what Paul is affirming in this text from Romans 8. Read with me, **[Add to slide: “We know that in all things, God works for good with those who love him.” (Rom 8:28)]** Note that it says, in *all* things. Even in the rough times, even in our mistakes and failures, God brings good from our life, our work, and our relationships. That was true for David, and for us.

Several years ago, I had a remarkable discussion with a 100 year old man. He was dying, and he wanted to talk with me about his life. For over two hours I listened to his story: the good, the bad, the joy, the pain, the successes, the failures. At the end of the conversation, he said to me, “I couldn’t always see it at the time, but I see now that through it all, through the good and the bad, God has been with me. And, in spite of my failures, God has used my life for good.” Well, the second great challenge of senior adulthood is affirming our life. Not only the past, but also the present, as well as the future. For the God who has worked for good in our life in the past will continue to do so to the very end of our days.

The third challenge of senior adulthood is **[Slide: 3. Achieving a Positive Perspective about Our Death]** Death can come at any time in life, but it becomes a major issue in senior adulthood. As more and more friends and peers die, seniors have to face the fact that life is not forever, that death is real. Some seniors respond to this reality with despair, full of fear that time is running out. But Christian believers do not have to face death with despair. Why? Because we believe in **[Add to slide with bullet in front of it: A Christian theology of Hope]**

For the Christian believer, death is not the last word. Because of the resurrection of Christ, we can face death with hope. That’s what Jesus is saying in this text from the Gospel of John. Read it with me, **[Add to slide: “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.”]** Death is not just an exit, death is also an entrance—an entrance to the fullness of God and eternal life. Therefore, Christian believers can say, as David did in Psalm 23, “yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me ... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Well, the third great challenge of senior adulthood is—affirming hope even in death.

I once heard about a piano teacher who taught many students over the course of her lifetime. **[Slide: photo of woman teaching a child to play the piano]** When she got them ready for recitals, she always encouraged them to perfect their endings. She insisted they practice the endings over and over again. When her students grumbled that it was boring going over and over the last few measures, she would answer, **[Add to slide this caption: “You can make a mistake in the beginning, or in the middle. But all will be forgotten when you manage to make the ending glorious.”]** Well, in his goodness, God has given us the resources to make the ending of our life glorious. God has given us the gift of **grace** that says—we have value and worth to the very end of our life. God has given us the gift of **providence** that says—throughout our entire life, even in the hard times and the failures, God has been at work in our life, bringing good from it. And God has given us the gift of **hope** that says—death is not the last word, for we will live eternally in the Kingdom of God. The senior adult years bring many challenges, but with God’s gifts of grace, and providence, and hope, we can indeed make the ending *glorious*. Thanks be to God.

LISTENING GUIDE

“Then David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; David said: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever.” ... Thus David son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. The period that he reigned over Israel was forty years ... He died in good old age, full of days, riches, and honor; and his son Solomon succeeded him.” (1 Chronicles 29:10, 26, 28)

1. Achieving a Positive Perspective about Our _____

- A Christian Theology of _____
“By the grace of God I am what I am, and God’s grace toward me has not been in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:10)

2. Achieving a Positive Perspective about Our _____

- A Christian Theology of _____
“We know that in all things, God works for good with those who love him.” (Romans 8:28)

3. Achieving a Positive Perspective about Our _____

- A Christian Theology of _____
“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.” (John 11:25)

