

Proper 16, Year C

[Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17](#)

Aug. 25, 2019

St. James, Wheat Ridge

Those crazy Parkland kids are at it again.
This past week, March for Our Lives,
The group founded by Parkland school shooting survivors,
Introduced a proposal that calls for
Sweeping gun restrictions across the country.
The proposal calls for raising the minimum age to buy a gun to 21,
Strengthening background checks,
And banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.
Their plan is a detailed strategy for addressing gun violence,
And raising the bar for gun ownership and responsibility in America.

Those crazy kids just are too young to know better.
They're too young to know that what they propose is impossible.
Too many people have already tried and failed.
The law of this country is clear:
There are to be NO impediments to gun sales,
No background checks,
No red flags,
No waiting periods,
No restrictions on selling weapons
that were designed not for hunting or sport or self-defense
but WERE designed to kill as many people as possible
in the shortest amount of time possible.

That's what the second Amendment,
Part of our constitution,
The law of the land,
Says. Isn't it?
And if people must suffer because of that,
Well so be it.
That's what the law says,
And there's only one way to read the law.
We know that.
Years of living with mass shootings
And rampant gun violence have taught us that.

These Parkland kids, I guess they're too young and idealistic
To know all that yet.
They still think they can change the world.
But they're gonna find out just how hard that is.
They're gonna find out just how much
The world resists changing.

Now, Jesus, he was a young man too.
Older, certainly, than the Parkland teens,
But he never made it out of his early 30s,
Which seems pretty young to me.

According to our constitution,
The same document that spells out our sacred relationship with guns,
That same document dictates that Jesus,
If he were around today and interested in running for office,
Would not be eligible to be president.
The minimum age to serve as president is 35.
I think it's a pity there's no upper age limit,
But I digress.

Jesus was an idealistic young man,
And like the Parkland kids,
He, too, ran into opponents
Who were fond of citing the law to him.
Jesus foolishly thought he could
Go around curing crippled ladies on the Sabbath.

The leader of the synagogue was indignant
When Jesus healed a woman
Who had been crippled for 18 years,
Unable to stand up straight.
How dare he! On the Sabbath!
"There are six days on which work ought to be done," he complained.
"Come on *those* days and be cured,
not on the Sabbath day."
The law was clear about this.
No work on the Sabbath.
And if healing isn't working, then what is it?

The lady would just have to accept
 That she was gonna be crippled
 Until she could come there on the right day.
 If she had to suffer because of that,
 Well, so be it.

But Jesus wasn't buying that argument.
 He called the synagogue leader and the people who agreed hypocrites,
 And reminded them that
 The law permitted even the most observant Jews
 To set free *animals* from bondage on the Sabbath day,
 And lead them to water.
 Ought not a woman, crippled for 18 years,
 Be allowed the same level of mercy,
 To be set free from HER bondage on the Sabbath?

We're told he shamed his opponents that day.
 I wonder what it would take
 For some of our leaders today to actually feel shame
 For their inaction
 and their lack of concern for the suffering of others?

But back to these Parkland kids.
 David Hogg, the 18-year-old co-founder of March for Our Lives,
 Acknowledges that their plan "seems ambitious,
 Given Washington's apathy to decades of bloodshed,"
 But he notes, "Policymakers have failed,
 So survivors are stepping up."

Maybe it's high time we listened to the young folks.
 Maybe it's time we, too, stepped up.

Jeremiah was just a boy when God called him.
 And Jeremiah was not happy to receive that call.
 "Lord," he said, "I don't know how to speak.
 I'm just a boy."

But God wasn't buying *that* argument either.

Don't say 'I am only a boy'" God tells Jeremiah.
"for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you."
God promised to give Jeremiah the words he would need
At the time he would need them.

Notice, he didn't promise Jeremiah things would be easy.
He never said "Jeremiah, people will love you."
"Jeremiah, you're going to succeed."

Nope, God didn't promise any of that.
The only promise a prophet gets from God is,
"I will be with you."

How many times has God called us to do something,
And like Jeremiah,
We find excuses not to.
"I can't do that, God. I'm too old."
"I can't do that, God. I don't have time."
"I can't do that, God. I don't know HOW to do that."

Like Jeremiah, sometimes we can't see beyond the horizon
Of our own limitations.
We feel inadequate and unprepared.
We're old enough to know what we can't do!

But God's response to Jeremiah's protest
Is the same response God makes to us today:
"I am with you. Do not be afraid."

Of course, that doesn't make it any less of a struggle.
Jeremiah's message did not endear him to his people.
A lot of people thought he was crazy.
A lot of people thought he didn't know what he was talking about.

But even at the lowest points in his ministry,
Jeremiah realized the truth of the promise God gave to him.

God never abandoned him.
The God who would not let him off the hook as a boy
Is also the God who would not let him go as a man.

When Jeremiah was bent over with care,
Worn down by his burden,
Got helped him to stand upright again,
Just as Jesus helped the crippled woman.
Just as God will help you and me.

There's a world out there
That has come to believe certain things are impossible.
There's a world
That's willing to live with the misery,
That's willing to accept the suffering of others,
Rather than challenging the status quo.

It's a world that needs to hear what prophets of all ages have to say.
God is calling us, just as God called Jeremiah.
God has things for us to do,
And things for us to say.
We may *think* we're too old or too busy or too incapable
To be of much service to God.
But God is not bound by OUR limitations.
God can help us to stand upright,
And to become the people that we are called to be.
This is what it means to live a life of purpose and meaning
In a world where so many others
Settle for so much less.

Those crazy Parkland kids are at it again.
They can't possibly be successful
Where so many before them have tried and failed.
Can they?
What would it take to change the world?

Amen.