

# **“Blessings from the Seventy-Five.”**

Genesis 12:1-4

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## **Genesis 12:1-4 (PowerPoint presentation)**

### Preface

I would like to first explain how we changed the name of the service from “Worship Service in Honor of the Elderly” to “Grand Generation Day” this year.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines people aged 65 and over as elderly.

The term “elderly” has been used to refer to those who are 75 years old or older at the Megumi Church Senior People Recognition Worship Service.

When I looked up the meaning of the word “commendation (recognition)” in a dictionary, I found that it means “to make widely known a hidden good deed or achievement”. It also means “to make widely known and to commend”.

In other words, the senior citizen recognition service is “a service in which we honor those 75 years of age and older, give thanks for the blessings of living together, and rejoice in the blessings of growing older in God’s love, while giving them small, heartfelt gifts of gratitude, however small they may be.

Of course, this includes introducing the work of the Kiraku Kiraku Service and sharing our support and prayers for the Kiraku Kiraku Service.

So naturally, I think it is the Lord’s blessing and grace that the service has been offered under the name of “Worship Service in Honor of the Elderly” until now.

However, I have begun to hear some people say that they feel uncomfortable about the name “honoring the elderly”.

“I’m 75 years old, but I’m still in good health, and I don’t feel good about being called a senior citizen... I don’t feel comfortable being honored as a senior citizen...” I have heard some of them say this.

Therefore, since about five years ago, the Worship Planning Committee has been discussing a new name to replace the “Senior Citizens Recognition Worship Service” every year.

We thought about “Blessing Service for Senior Citizens,” “Senior Blessing Service,” “Silver Generation Blessing Service,” “Kiraku Kiraku Day” or “Kiraku Kiraku Service Day,” and so on, until we finally came up with the name “Grand Generation Day.”

### Part One

The name of the “Service of Commendation for the Elderly” was previously written entirely in Chinese characters, but “Grand Generation Day” is the exact opposite: all of the expressions are in katakana. I was concerned that people might be a bit surprised by this change. However, as services with “Day” such as “Manna Day” and “Morigaku Day” are offered every year, and services with katakana expressions such as “Eastertide,” “Advent,” and “Christmas Groove” have been offered in the past, we thought it would be accepted in the same way as those services.

The meaning of the word “Grand Generation” is wonderful, and it seems to me that it not only fully encompasses the intent of the services offered under the name of “Senior Citizens Recognition Worship Service,” but it also adds even more meaning to it.

At first glance, the term “Grand Generation” seems to be an English word, but it is actually a Japanese word, not a word that originally existed in English.

It was coined by a broadcaster and scriptwriter named Kundo Koyama.

He is also the creator of Kumamon, the Kumamoto Prefecture character.

The term “Grand Generation” was coined to describe people who are actively enjoying their second life after retirement.

The word “grand” means “superlative,” and the term “grand generation” is a respectful way of referring to the elders of the generation who are enjoying life in various styles, aging young and with a wealth of knowledge and experience, while considering themselves as the top generation in life.

We dared to consider using the Japanese expression of the term “Grand Generation” and calling it “The Most Excellent Generation

Blessing Service,” but we rejected the idea because it was a bit too heavy-handed.

As far as we are concerned, our neighbor Aeon Mall has been supporting this concept of “Grand Generation” and has been running a campaign and developing products while calling Respect for the Aged Day “G.G. Day,” an acronym for “Grand Generation,” for about 10 years now. That’s right.

(It is by no means “G.G. Day.”)

And most importantly, why did we decide to “go with Grand Generation Day!” The most important reason is that there are many people of God who were used by God as the most advanced generation and important biblical characters in the Bible.

## Part Two

Abraham in Genesis 12, which we read earlier, was a man whose life was changed by the hand of God at the age of 75 years old.

The Bible says, “I will bless you, and you will be a blessing, and all generations of people in this world and throughout the world will be blessed through you. I have chosen you as the starting point of the blessing of I, who is God.” He received the promise from the Lord God, who created heaven and earth and all things.

And the words of that promise came to ultimate fulfillment with the birth of Jesus, the Savior, the image of God, who came to this earth to redeem and deliver mankind from the wages of sin, eternal destruction and eternal suffering in the burning Gehenna Hell, as a descendant of Abraham.

God’s work is not only done in a short span of one or two years, but when we look at the Bible, we see that it is done over a period of 100 or 1000 years, a time span that is difficult to imagine for those of us whose lives are often less than a hundred years.

So, the scale of the story may be too large to be understood, but for Abraham, who is the one in question, the question is, “Why now? Why me? Even if it was me, I would have had more power and potential when I was a little younger, so why bother with me now, when I am old?” We can imagine from other biblical passages that there must have been hesitation and doubts.

Furthermore, if we look at Genesis 12:7,

**Genesis 12:7 (PowerPoint)**

**“The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.”**

God gives Abraham these words, which were incomprehensible to Abraham, who was 75 years old and had no children.

Even though Abraham was confused that God chose his old age to give him the land, I think that God’s words must have spurred him on and made him confused.

But after this, God told Abraham something more specific and incomprehensible to him who did not understand what God was intending.

He said, “I will give a son to you and to your wife Sarah, who is as old as you are.”

God told Abraham, who was 100 years old and still childless, the most specific details of “giving him a son”. For Abraham, it was too specific and even more confusing, and he and his 90-year-old wife, Sarah, responded with a mocking smile, “How is that possible?”

I think it was a natural reaction from us limited human beings.

But from God’s point of view, Abraham’s age was the perfect time, a time when there was absolutely no possibility, when there was no human power at all.

I am reminded of the Apostle Paul’s confession.

“I am strong in weakness because of Christ. If I need to boast, I will boast about my weakness. We are weak in Christ, but we live with Him by the power of God.” We are reminded of Paul’s confession that “the time when nothing is beyond our power is the time of God.”

It is the time of the Lord when we are weak physically, mentally, or spiritually.

In a sense, we can say that growing old is a time when the Lord’s time opens up for us.

One day, I said to myself, “This is hard. I can’t do it. I can’t do it. I have neither the ability nor the talent to do it,” and I felt so weak that I couldn’t get out of bed. But then my wife said to me, “Well, then, just pray. Pray, ‘I can’t do it. That’s where it starts.”

I thought to myself, “I know that. Even though I know that, it’s hard because I can’t do it.” But then, slowly, the thought, “Yes, it is,” welled up like a small light beginning to shine in the darkness where there was not a single light.

After all, I live day after day with the mindset of “I’ll do it, please help me”.

In the end, I try to rely on my own strength, my own thoughts, my own ideas, my own rightness, my own excellence, my own pride and boasting, my own ability to be more distinguished, and I am frustrated, disappointed, and determined to be no good. I don’t even try to concede the gaps where God’s power is expressed.

No, I am coming to the realization that I have been using and seeking God to fill such gaps, that fulfilling God’s will was not the purpose of my life. I have come to realize that I have been trying to live a life of faith, saying that I have been heard or not heard, given or not given, opened or not opened, protected or not protected, according to the degree to which my things have been accomplished or fulfilled.

In this sense, to grow old is to create a situation in which everyone must face his or her own weakness, through physical and mental decline, and with it, the opportunity to experience the power, honor, vigor, wisdom, and glory of the Lord God will expand.

If you feel physical decline, you will feel closer to death than before, and if you feel death, you will not be able to help but think about and hope for life beyond it. We will be forced to acknowledge our own helplessness as we move toward death against our will. In the face of the reality that the life you have always believed to be your life is not in accordance with your will, you will think, “There must be someone who is in charge of life, there must be someone, no, I need him to be there, I want to be rewarded for this life. If there is someone, I want to ask for help from that person.”

### Part Three

Moses was the same way.

Moses was 80 years old when he was called by God to lead the people of Israel. Moses himself wrote in Psalm 90, “Our age is seventy years, and even if we are healthy, eighty years. Most of it is toil and hardship.” For Moses, it was an age at which he would live each day with an awareness of death: “If I die now or tomorrow, there is nothing strange about it.”

In fact, when God told Moses, “I will use you, who are 80 years old, to lead more than 2 million people of Israel, out of slavery in Egypt,” Moses, like Abraham, said, “Please do not say such unrealistic and foolish things. I am just an old man living my days as if I could die at any moment, let alone have nothing to live for.”

However, for the next 40 years until the age of 120, and at the age of 120, Moses’ condition at the time of his death was,

### **Deuteronomy 34:7 (PowerPoint)**

This was the state that he was in.

In other words, no matter how much you are aware and prepared for your own death, you cannot end your life. God says, “That’s it!” then that is the end of your life. All of life and all of its possibilities are in God’s hands.

“When God’s work is being done through that life, life is blessed, just as bush that should burn up quickly does not burn up, but continues to burn, allowing God’s will to be done. When we do this, we can rejoice in a joy that is not dependent on conditions, and realize that the life we have been given is the best life we can have.” This is what Moses learned, demonstrated, and taught us through the way he lived his life, and as he wrote down his actual experience of that life, he also taught it to us who live in the 21st century.

I think we can be taught that weakness, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, is not a bad thing in God’s hands, but rather, it is God’s time, a time of waiting and a time of opportunity.

Grand Generation Day.

What age is considered the Grand Generation (the top generation) may differ from person to person: 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, or 120 years old. However, one fact that the Bible teaches us is that if we live godly lives, if we live according to the Lord Jesus, we will live by listening to, obeying, and doing His teachings and His Word. Life with the Lord Jesus, heart to heart with Him, and with Him in the heart, is always the best generation.

Difficulties and frustrations over which we have no control. Is it rust from the body, or is it a predestined guidance that I have no control over? Is it a decline or an appropriate level? Is it a hardship to be

endured or a wall to try to break through? Is it powerlessness or ineffectiveness? Should we accept or resist? As we walk through these indescribable paths of life, one fact we can learn from the Bible is the promise that all of them, if they are in Jesus Christ, are the best generation, the Grand Generation.

Both Abraham and Moses encountered God at the so-called advanced age of 75 and 80, respectively.

Their lives since then have been marked by greater hardships, unprecedented setbacks, helplessness, and ineffectiveness than they had experienced in their earlier lives, but all their lives since then have been the Grand Generation.

### Conclusion

I once visited a person who had fallen ill and was no longer able to lead the same kind of life as before. I met the person while wondering, "What kind of face and expression should I put on?" Then, he greeted me with a cheerful expression, as if he were speaking to me, "Why do you have such a worried expression on your face?"

And then, he said:

"I can't go to church whenever I want to like before, and I can't move my body freely like before, but I am really happy now.

I replay the Sunday service messages that I have heard so far in my mind and savor them again, recite the words of the Bible that I have stored up, and talk to Jesus. I could never be in such a conversation for 24 hours with Jesus, so I am happy now."

The best generation or grand generation for a person depends on that person being with Jesus, in His word, and in Him.

Whether over 75 or under 75, all are Grand Generation if they are in the Lord Jesus.

I hope that we can take a new step forward with the blessing of being in the Lord Jesus and in the Grand Generation.

Let's pray.

Benediction: Genesis 12:2