

Baptism and Youth

Life is a funny thing, isn't it? For it is made up of a series of moments, which come one after another. Some of these moments are good; some of them not so good. By in large, though, most of the moments of our life pass us by without notice. So much so, it seems you wake up one random morning wondering where all the time has gone? You realize so much of your life has slipped by unawares. We do our best to slow down, don't we? We try to savor the moment, to take it all in, but time marches on.

What's true of all life is true of mine. This past week I celebrated 15 years in the ministry, all of which has been spent right here with you. Funny how life works out isn't it? For this was supposed to be a short time gig for me; one that I thought I would work at for a moment or two and then move on to something else. And yet, here I am after all these years. You'd think after so many years in the ministry, so much study of God's Word, I would be an expert on all things God. And yet, I still feel like a child playing at adulthood. For God always has something new to say to me, reminding me I don't know it all. Just when I think I have it all figured out, life shifts and rearranges and then I have to start all over again. I don't know much, but what I do know is that all of life is a dealing with God. He weaves our moments together into this great tapestry of which He alone knows the pattern of the grand design. As I pondered the great moments of my own life, it struck me how each one was interlinked with the next, springing forth and returning back to God. Our God is a giving God bestowing grace upon grace at every stage of life. And so, what a joy it is to be here today to celebrate the Baptism of Ruby Rose Strizu. Each time we witness a Baptism our minds should dwell on one simple and guiding principle: HOPE. Because every time we witness a Baptism, we are reminded that there is hope in a hopeless world; that God's anger lasts but for a little while, but His favor is everlasting. God meant it when He said: "the wages of sin is death". With each generation that withers and dies we see the effects of God's wrath and the continuation of Adam's sin. Life moves steadily onwards, and like the changing of seasons some of us are in the spring of life others the summer, while still others the autumn, but soon the winter comes for us all. Death is part of living in a post-Eden world. So how is it possible to have hope then when we must live with the certainty of death. And the older you get the more certain it becomes. For it is easy to have hope when you possess the strength of youth, but natural hope withers when youth withers. Youth is the cause of hope if you think about it. For only in youth is the future long and the

past short. But when life grows short then hope grows weary. The “not yet” is turned into the has-been, the “what-ifs” of life get fewer and fewer and we are haunted more and more by the memories of “what-might-have-been”. And if this was all there was to life then hope would be an impossibility. This is why as Christians we cling to our Baptisms. For the promise of eternal life is not some empty promise. It’s not the same as the forced and superficial cult of youthfulness we see all around us. Trying to act young is not the same as being eternally youthful. This is why we can say that God is both the “Ancient of Days” and yet younger than us all. And this same eternally youthful God lends His youth to each of us. For while weeping may endure for a night, joy comes in the morning. God is a God of life, and we see His life all around us. The gift of children, the very fact that there is a next generation, should fill us with hope. The Psalmist tells us, “Children are a gift of God, the fruit of the womb is His reward.” The word ‘reward’ here is the same word used to describe God’s compassion. This is how God shows His compassion by the very fact that new generations come forward. That generations pass away is a testimony to our sin; that new generations come forward is a testimony to God’s salvation. For God has not given up on this world. Every child that is born is a reminder that God has not abandoned His people. Every child that is born takes us back to the most important of births when from the blessed womb of Mary, Christ our Lord was ushered forth. For there, God made known His ultimate plan to have compassion on the whole world through the fruit of the womb. And in the waters of Baptism, we are brought into that very birth of Christ and receive His life.

This is hope and Baptism gives us this hope. It is the promise of a tomorrow. For what we witnessed on a small and personal scale in the Baptism of Ruby Rose this morning, God will do on a universal scale one day soon when He will raise all of His people out of the dust, out of sin, out of death, to live with Christ in the fullness of the resurrection life. At which time, the moments of life will no longer pass before us unnoticed for we will live in the eternal moment, in the eternal present before the eternal gaze of our good and gracious Lord. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Jeremy H. Mills