

So, safe to say we are certainly thankful for the youth in our midst, for the families supporting them, as well as for Lyla and for Daniel and Alexis allowing us to be a part of her baptism. But sometimes we as the church witness a morning like this and we automatically focus on the future. Not necessarily a bad thing, but in doing so, we sometimes overlook the holy present moment. We see children leading children's sermons and prayers and Scripture, and we hope beyond hope for them to help lead a ministry at a church down the line. All the while not fully engaging with what is being spoken by them now, by their own ministry now, by their gifts and talents already flourishing by the Holy Spirit to grab hold of our attention, as we often focus on what needs to be done for the upcoming holiday or other adulting responsibilities. Maybe the youth are not meant for us to consider what lies ahead, but to be thankful for them in the here and now.

And then there's the baptism, which, again, we in the church tend to focus on its future promise: about God insisting to take care of Lyla in the eternal realm. But what if God hopes for something else in these rather holy moments.

What if the indescribable gift as described in Second Corinthians for this particular worship instance, is not so much about a heavenly gift, but for us to pause amidst the busyness of this life. Take a moment before the holiday chaos ensues. Take a break from trying to figure out all the meal plans needed between one-year olds to those with all the dietary restrictions. Take a moment before all the obsession overwhelms us with the gifts and wrapping paper galore. Maybe God yearns for us to take this time and be thankful for the here and now.

Take this sacred space in and marvel over Lyla just as she is now. Take in the Gospel possibility that she already has something to offer to the rest of us supposedly mature adults, who have too much to worry about to make sure children are taken care of and we get them to the right schools and all the extra curricular activities possible in the slight case we raise the next professional athlete or that they can do all of this and all of that for all the scholarships imaginable. Yes, the time will come for such things for Lyla and so many of the youth here, if it hasn't already, but maybe God is blessing us with this time and this space to simply be thankful for what is right here in front of us.

Maybe as Lyla is baptized with the utter simplicity of water, God is helping us see that Lyla is being called into an endless line of disciples of Christ, and that she doesn't have to wait until preschool or junior high or college or our church equivalent of first Communion or Confirmation to make an impact on Daniel and Alexis and Ella and Derek and the rest of her family, and all those she will meet along her life journey. She doesn't have to wait to make her impact. She can reel you in with the utter simplicity of a smile and laughter and giggles and cuddles and snuggles, and that maybe through her just as she is, you might just experience the tender embrace of God.

Maybe as Lyla is marked with oil in the shape of a cross, it will remind all of us, that from our very beginning, we have the Holy Spirit capability to constantly remind others that amidst a world with more than its fair share of fears and worries and struggles galore, during a holiday season or not; that through it all Lyla and the rest of us have the capacity to show others the ultimate power of love, that not even death stood a chance in Jesus Christ.
And maybe all Lyla has to do is grab hold onto your finger or give you a hug as if you mean the world, and in that simple, but holy moment, you do, in fact, feel a most precious glimpse of God grabbing a hold of you as if you are worth all the world.

So, maybe this worship is not so much about the future, but being thankful for the here and now: for the gifts and talents of children that are already flourishing before our eyes, to see God just as much active in them as the rest of us supposedly more mature adults. Yes, God is more than willing to take care of all of us in the far-off distant eternal vista, but God is not waiting around for us to get there. God adores Lyla and all these youth and the rest of us far too much to not be right here, right now. And no matter what lies ahead for Lyla and all these youth, nothing will ever happen in their life to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. So, for that Greatest News for Lyla and all of us, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!