

From Generation to Generation

*Proper 20, Year A — Exodus 16:2–15 · Psalm 105:1–6, 37–45 ·
Philippians 1:21–30 · Matthew 20:1–16*

Two things are happening in this room today, and on the surface they have nothing to do with each other.

A beginning — a baby, water, a name spoken over a font - *Grayson*.

And a long, faithful life — ninety years of them, wrapped up in one person we love - *Velda*.

Grayson and Velda are not related.

At least not by blood, and not by marriage.

Velda is still very much married to Grantley.

And Grayson should not even be thinking about marriage!

And yet they will stand in

- the same promise today — from generation to generation
- the same water of baptism,
- the same family of God,
- and in the same room.

And that is the point.

...

Our readings keep reaching across generations.

The Exodus reading presents us with Israel grumbling in the wilderness.

Their stomachs are louder than their footsteps.

They are hungry, they are scared, and the promised freedom is showing itself to be harder than the slavery they left behind.

What is interesting is that ... God does not scold them.

God feeds them.

God gives them Bread from heaven.

And he does so every morning.

They decide to call it Manna — which basically means "*what is it?*"

They don't even know what to call it.

What they eat is this "what is it?"

Curiosity.

Just hang on to that thought, we will come back to it in a moment.

....

But ... Here is the detail that stops me every time:

they cannot store this "*what is it?*", *this Manna*.

Gather too much and it rots by morning.

It's got to be fresh, daily, for each day.

...

Friends, God does not hand one generation a lifetime supply and say, "Good luck, pass it down the line."

God shows up again — every morning, for every generation, in whatever wilderness they are standing in.

"Give us our daily bread."

That is what the Lord's prayer teaches us.

Daily.

Not once and for all.

The Psalm calls this the God who remembered his covenant for ever, "the word that he commanded for a thousand generations."

A thousand generations.

It's like a flame passed from candle to candle and never once blown out.

You can almost hear Israel teaching it to their children at bedtime.

And their children teaching it to theirs.

"This is who we are.

This is whose we are.

Remember that."

And this where, I believe Paul comes in in his letter to the Phillipians.

He says:

- Stand firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.
- Side by side: The old and the young.
- Side by side: The weary and the brand new.
- Side by side: on the same journey
- Side by side: under the same sky.
- Living under the same Grace!!!
- The same denarius!

You see, Velda is like the first lot employed in the morning to work the vineyard since dawn.

Ninety years.

- Ninety years of Sundays, of prayers said in the dark, of faithfulness nobody applauded, of showing up when it was hard and staying when leaving would have been easier.

She has carried that flame forward for 9 decades.

And here is what we get to say to her today: **Well done.**

Not because she earned it — but because God was faithful to her first.

And still is.

And little Grayson — Grayson is like a fellow hired at five o'clock.

He has no accomplishments to lay at the altar ... yet.

No long obedience to point to ... yet.

He arrives with nothing but need.

And he receives everything.

The same water, the same promise, the same denarius of grace given to every saint who ever lived.

That denarius is what binds Velda and Grayson together.

Not a family tree — but the Grace of God at the font.

The childhood we share in God

You see, Grayson may look like he has nothing to offer us.

But I hold the opinion that children ... in fact have a lot to offer us.

*Children teach us something we are in the habit of forgetting:
That we never stop being God's children.*
They do so in at least four ways

1. The first way: Grayson needs love.

So do we and makes sure his parents know it.
You see, that need never goes away.
It does not retire at ninety.
It is the shape of a creature made for communion.
And we always find that love in God!

2. The second way: Grayson is curious.

He explores the world with his mouth — and we grab things from him.
The world is like one huge “what is it?” (Like Manna) to him.
He puts it in his mouth.
This spirit of “what is it?” never really goes away. When we grow up, we call this reason and exploration.
You see, every deep thought, every question — be it scientific, philosophical, mathematical, even theological — is still a child exploring putting the “what is it?” in its mouth.
The slight difference is that ... we chew on thoughts now, that is all.
And in this church we will NEVER ask you to leave your mind at the door when you come in...
NEVER!!!

- *we are too Anglican for that sort of attitude!*
What we want is for you to be as curious as Grayson.
Chew with your mind.

Ask: What is it???? (Just like the Israelites asked in the desert)... Even “Who is this God?”

This is how we live out our perpetual childhood in God

3. The third way: Grayson wants to be happy.

Don't we all.
Happiness is how a child of God says “amen.”
Now, Velda asks me often, “are you and your family happy here?”
Ninety years in, still checking on the joy of folk in the household of God!!!
This is the happiness we find in fellowship with God and each other.
Grayson's happy spirit reminds us that joy is a mark of a child of God... even in a world that is imperfect.

4. Which takes me to the fourth point: before we think of it, Grayson will turn two.

And we know what happens then
We will hear it:
No! and *It's unfair.*
We call it the terrible twos.
Does it just sound like our first reading from Exodus?
But there is something holy in it.

You see, we live in an unfair world — a world where injustice seems to reign.
And right there in this unfair world, we are called to cry out against that very unfairness.
We call that being prophetic.
Grayson may not be accurate with his use of that gift yet.
We can be.
And so, we are called to be two year old, with many years of experience!!!

So yes, Grayson has no story to share yet.
But he already belongs to one far older than he is.
He is not starting the faith today.
He is receiving a fire lit a thousand generations before he was born
— and so is everyone who comes to this water.
The vineyard owner does not pay by the hour.
He pays by the promise.
Velda, ninety years in.
Grayson, carried in at the eleventh hour.
They walk out with the same denarius in their hands.
Not one more.
Not one less.
And they are not just standing in the same promise.
They are teaching each other what that promise means.

Grayson reminds us we never stop being children.

Velda shows us what a child's trust looks like when you hold it for ninety years
— and we have a word for that.
We call it faithfulness.
Faithfulness in divine childhood held over many years!

Neither has more of God than the other.
And so, neither is ahead of the other — which is exactly why Paul told us to stand firm side by side.
Velda has *the years* and *the prayers* to steady us.
Grayson has *the wonder* and *the need* that keep us honest.
Each has something to give the other.
Both are held by the same hand.

We have a lot to learn from each other.
We have a lot to learn from each other.
We have a lot to share.

So today we do what the Church has always done.
We take water, a name, and a promise — and we pass them forward.
And we will say a prayer of Gratitude for Velda

To Velda we (will) say: **well ... done.**
To Grayson: **wel...come.**

And to each other: *stand firm, side by side — the old and the young, the weary and the brand new, on the same journey, under the same sky.*

Thanks be to God.