

"From Age to Age the Same"  
Isaiah 46:3-4

January 27, 2019  
Sunday

Life

*(Based on the sermon by Rev. Michael Salemink, Lutherans for Life)*

Ever since we recently acquired our iPhones, my wife and I have become part of a massive number of people who can show you pictures of their grandchildren at the drop of a hat. No longer does film have to develop and pictures be sent over the US mail. No longer do you have to haul out bulky photo albums. No longer do you have to carry a special packet of pictures (Grandma's Brag Book). Now, as soon as our sons take pictures of their daughters, they are loaded to our phones immediately. And of course, every picture is so cute.

I'm sure that there are pictures of our granddaughters which are not cute. However, those pictures aren't sent. We only get the best of the best. However, there are plenty of pictures taken by people throughout the land which show babies and toddlers in a less than cute position. There are pictures of babies crying for the silliest of reasons, such as they couldn't get the last cheerio on his spoon. There are pictures of babies throwing tantrums because a favorite toy was taken from them. There are pictures of babies sulking because their brother got a bigger piece of cake they did. There are pictures of babies getting hysterical because they didn't get to watch the video they wanted.

One fun thing associated with picture taking and picture receiving is trying to decide who these toddlers look like. When our son send us pictures, we look at how the child looks like either mom or dad. With cute kids, that's a compliment.

But what about the pictures of the crying, tantruming, sulking, and hysterical toddlers? Who do these pictures remind you of? Isaiah says such pictures should remind us of Israel. In our text for today, Isaiah pictures Israel as a baby and says, "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been born by me from before your birth, carried from the womb." (Isaiah 46:3) this analogy appears already in chapter one where it reads, "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me" (Isaiah 1:2). I always remember, thinking as a kid in Sunday School, how strange it was for the people of Israel to be called "the children of Israel" in the old translations. After growing up and reading more of the story, it all made sense to me. They were called children because that's exactly what they often acted like – children.

The Israelites cried like children whenever they didn't get what they wanted exactly when they wanted it. Remember how they complained about being slaves in Egypt and wanted out but then cried like children when they didn't get food and drink right away and reminisced about how great it was to be in Egypt?

The Israelites sulked like children when they didn't get their way from God. Remember how they sulked like spoiled brats when they didn't get a variety of food in the desert like they had when they were slaves in Egypt,? They had just that boring old

mana. I picture them as crossing their arms in front of their chest and sticking out there lip to show how displeased they were.

The Israelites were hysterical like little children when things seem to be threatening. Remember how hysterical they got before they crossed the Red Sea. They had the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh's armies behind them and they were afraid so they got all hysterical even though God would lead them across the Red Sea on dry ground.

Imagine Israel's baby pictures. What would they look like? Would they remind you of you? Of course not! Silly Israel for acting like children. We are so much better, aren't we? At least we don't bow down before idols like they did. Okay, maybe we worship our professions. Maybe we serve prosperity. Maybe we focus on success, submit ourselves to popularity, and surrender to pleasure.

But at least we haven't forgotten the words and ways of Almighty God like they did. Okay, maybe we dismiss the doctrines which our culture finds offensive, but at least we aren't blurring the line between right and wrong. Okay, maybe we allow, support, and do what is convenient, comfortable, practical, and profitable, but at least we haven't abandoned the widowed or fatherless like they did. Okay, maybe we keep disadvantaged people at a safe distance because of the controversies and costs that come with caring for them, but at least we don't exploit the impoverished or outsiders among us. Ok maybe we use their emergencies to excuse our excesses, but at least we don't cheat and steal. Okay, maybe we use all of our resources for us which could save the life of others now, but it is easier to depend upon policies and governmental agencies to deal with them.

Thankfully, we don't act like Israel. It's a good thing we don't behave like those sinners. No, we have become even more dreadful than those sinners. We fear public opposition to the truth of God's Word more than we fear God's disapproval for when we disregard or water down down His word. Our leaders revere profits (the monetary kind) more then prophets (those who speak the Word of God). Our culture blesses death as some kind of salvation from suffering. Our country treats the sexual appetites of our sinful flesh as if they were sacraments to which we were entitled. Our experts idolize autonomy and individual control over our own bodies even when self-expression means self-destruction. Our celebrities exult sexual license to a religion. Our communities abort our brothers in the name of freedom. Our world euthanizes our sisters for the sake of rights. Our consciences are no longer offended by these things. Our minds justify and rationalize these things. Our mouths remain silent and our hands stand idly by. Our hearts sometimes even promote these things.

Whose baby pictures are these? It's not just Israel. They're ours, every one of us. It's our species, incapacitated by sinful nature. Our entire humanity is unresponsive to the core. Our whole race is weakened from conception until last breath. Our species in totality is deadened by temptation and sin. Like babies, we are all difficult, discontent, and disobedient because of pain and loss which we have suffered or perceived to have suffered. Like terminal patients, we are disruptive and

dependent in the face of fear and grief. Senseless and defenseless, these baby pictures shows us, from age to age the same.

Whose baby pictures are these? They are also God's. God has been a baby too. God became a baby. He had a nature and a heart just like us. Israel introduces embryo Jesus gestated in Mary's womb – "the virgin shall conceive." Infant Jesus wore diapers and lay in a manger. Chubby cheeked Lord Jesus a toddler. Skinny-legged Lord Jesus had a childhood. Savior Jesus was gentle and relentless in adolescence. Isaiah reminds us that Savior Jesus was determined in adulthood to carry out His Father's will – "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter." Christ Jesus – humble in the Garden of Gethsemane, vulnerable under the judgment of Roman law, broken on the cross and incapacitated by crucifixion. God chose to become weakened, deadened, defenseless like one of us. Behold, He *is* one of us.

God Almighty made Himself tiny that He might draw near to each of us. The Most High made Himself humble so that He might dwell with all of us. He shares in our ailments and our pains. He suffers with us in our discontent and hysterics. He saves us from our own deficits and failures. This Father will have you despite your sulking and tantruming. The Savior assumes your difficulties and accepts your differences. The Lord takes on your immaturities and takes away your sin. Despite your disrupting and demanding, He still welcomes you and wants you. Through your emergencies or your excesses, He respects you and protects you. He embraces even those of us who participate in abortion. Jesus cherishes us even when we promote or support assisted suicide. God forgives us who sin and protects those littlest and weakest among us who are the victims of that sin. He loves you, whether rich or poor; successful or failure; healthy or sick; vibrant or dying. His grace pronounces babies and aged, impaired and unable, human beginning to end, priceless.

Who are all these baby pictures – the cute and not so cute? They are all God's. They are all God's babies. We are all His little one you "have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb, [now] even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save."

By His resurrection He has removed all our not-enough-ness, as high as the heavens are above the earth. With His everlasting presence, Jesus releases from any limitations, as far as east is from West. Because he lives and reigns, every human being has this identity, this purpose, belonging to and beloved by Him who has neither rival nor equal, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever, from age to age the same. Accept it. Trust it. You are innocent to God because of Jesus. Know it. Own it. You are righteous in Christ. Receive it. Believe it. You are holy before God.

If this applies to us, then it applies to any and every. Israel's crying kids and babies await. These are their pictures too. They look like us. They look like Jesus. He calls them each by name. He calls us by his name. He is their survival and salvation is much as he is your hope and healing. These are somebody's babies. Someone important and powerful loves these babies. Even when no one else calls them baby, He whispers it, sings, repeats, and shouts it. In frightened bellies and frozen labs, whether conceiving or aging, afraid or ashamed, alone or unaware, He wraps Himself around especially the ones who feels their frailty more than most. Public opinion and

political controversy cannot change these facts. Scientific findings and technological innovations do not amend these truths. Social experiences and economic circumstances will not modify this God. As for patriarchs and prophets, for apostles and martyrs, for reformers and forefathers, for saints and angels, so to postmodern and nobodies like us – from age to age His grace prevails the same.

You can bear witness to this truth. You get to reflect this love. You have the privilege of sharing this good news about a God who loves always and everyone. We have the opportunity to give it voice. We had the delight of putting it into practice. In individual conversations and civic advocacy, at congregations and across communities, you'll see the babies in these pictures. By acts of service and sharing – opening your hands, your hearts, and your homes – you'll take hold of heaven's treasures. With words of warning or winning over, encouragements and assurances, you'll cradle the Lord's own little ones. While noticing, visiting, and listening, you'll be God's representative in this loveless and painful world.

Wonder what to say? Worried about how to think? Want to know how to get more involved? Individuals and organizations like Lutherans For Life can show and tell you what to do. For forty years, two generations, Lutherans for Life has found the words and done the work, connecting life's issues to Scripture and doctrine. They have so many free resources and ample materials to help you. Join with them and other Christians and make this ministry your own. Enlist in the purpose. Participate in the hope. Experience the joy. Watch tears be wiped away. Walk together in new life. This paradise life is never-ending – from age to age the same. Amen.