

WHO AM I?

In the beginning when God created . . .

Genesis 1:1

*But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Matthew 6:33

Today, we are celebrating the lives and faith of Carter Long and Kaylee Ostrander as we join them in reaffirming our baptismal vows and confirming them in their faith. This sermon is what I spoke directly to Kaylee and Carter, but the rest of us are not just on-lookers. I hope that we will find that what I said to them is true for each one of us.

Carter and Kaylee, today is the perhaps the most important day in their life. I say “perhaps” because the day you were born is also important. Without that day you wouldn’t even be here. But after that, today is the most important day in your life.

Now, you may think that I’m saying that because it is my job to say things like that—that’s what I get paid for. But even if I weren’t your pastor, even if I didn’t get paid for saying it, I still think that today is the most important day of your life.

Today is about more than just completing the two-year course of confirmation classes. It is not a graduation. It is the day when you affirm the baptism you received when you were an infant.

When you claim your baptism and your identity as a child of God, when you make a profession of your faith in your own words—if you really believe what you are saying this day, this process you have gone through in the past two years, will be the most important time of your life and will shape the rest of your life. Maybe not what you will do for an occupation or where you will go or even what you will continue to believe—but it will shape who you become as a person.

Both of you have chosen a scripture verse as your own. I hope you keep that verse with you all your life, and maybe even add to it. In fact, I would like to add a couple more for you to remember.

The first one is actually the first few words of the first book in the Bible, the Book of Genesis: “In the beginning, God created . . .”

Everything else in the Bible, everything in the world, follows after that statement that “God created.” All life in the world, as well as your life, my life, the life of all of us here—all life comes from God. Your life is not something you made or something you achieve by hard work or being really smart. You don’t have to do anything to earn it; you don’t have to be good enough to deserve it. It is just given. It is a gift. All you have to do is receive it and be grateful for it. Being grateful is more than just saying “Thanks a lot.” Being grateful also means appreciating what we have been given. And one of the best ways we can show appreciation is by living our life to the best of our abilities and sharing our life with others and with the world. But the most important part is the first part, to remember that our lives comes to us as God’s gift, not as something we make or achieve.

And that reminds me of a time when Jesus was talking to a crowd of people. He was talking about the things we need, like food and shelter and clothing. And, of course, we have to work to get those things, but Jesus was saying that even as we work for those things we shouldn’t be anxious about them, we shouldn’t worry about the things we need. Here is how Eugene Peterson translates the words of Jesus from Matthew 6: 33—“Give your entire

attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes." (The Message)

In the next few years, especially as you get closer to graduation from high school, you will probably be told more than once to dream your own dreams, to dream big and you can become whatever you want to be. And I hope that for you. I can't wish anything more for you than you become what you dream, and that you are happy and successful wherever you go and whatever you do.

But if you make it your goal to make the very first and most important thing you want to be is a child of the God who loves you—all your other dreams and accomplishments will be meaningful and satisfying. And even if you don't achieve what you dream now, even if your life turns out differently from what you dreamed, even when you make mistakes and suffer disappointments and failures—no matter what happens, through all the things that will come to you in your life, it will be OK. And you will be OK. If you make it your goal to continue becoming a child of God, just like we all are still becoming a child of God, whatever else you do, you will have the best life you can have, the most content and deeply fulfilled life.

Whatever you dream, wherever you go, whatever you do or become in your life, and especially whatever decisions you face about what you will do or become, always begin by asking yourself this: Who am I? And then, remember your baptism, remember your confirmation in faith, but most of all, remember who you are. I am a child of God who loves me.

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