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I'm amazed sometimes to see where things grow... where life springs forth...

I remember one time when we lived in Cleveland, we were renting a house where the gutters hadn't been cleaned in a long time... one day I noticed trees sprouting up on the roof! I quickly cleaned out the gutters.

Scientists are amazed at what they're discovering....

At one time it was thought that all life was confined to particular environments...

It was thought that life could be found in:
nothing colder than Antarctica,
nothing hotter than the desert,
nothing higher than the clouds, and
nothing lower than a few mines.



In the last 30 years, however, life has been discovered in extreme

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environments...
microbes in nuclear reactors,
some that love acid,
some that swim in boiling-hot water,
some that live in deep sea vents where sunlight never reaches.

Life springs forth in surprising places!

Spiritually this is true too.

It seems that God delights in surprising us, confounding our conventional wisdom and bringing forth life at times of hopelessness.

Instead of using a mighty warrior to rescue His people from the ruthless giant Goliath, God sent a young shepherd boy with a sling. The Israelites were given new life at a time when all seemed hopeless.

Instead of using an army of 32,000 men to defeat the armies of Midian, God reduced the number to a meager 300 men to defeat the huge army. The Israelites were given new life even when the odds were ridiculous.

Instead of protecting the Israelites in a sensible way, God commanded them to put blood on the door frames of their houses in order to spare them from the plague of death. The Israelites were given new life at a time when all seemed hopeless.

Instead of giving sensible medicine to the people in the wilderness when being bitten by deadly vipers, God commanded the people to simply gaze at a bronze serpent on a pole in order to live. The Israelites were given new life at a time when all seemed hopeless.

The list is endless of the ways God confounds mans wisdom - both in

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nature and spiritually and brings about life instead of certain death.

Today we brought two little girls to the Lord in Baptism.



For many, this creates some tension in our minds. It doesn't make sense. It confounds our best reasoning.

The reasoning goes:

“Baptism is for adults... babies don't even know what is happening to them”

“Babies can't possibly have enough understanding for this to “do” anything”

“Babies can't possibly have the necessary reason or faith to receive the benefits of Baptism”

“Baptism of an infant can't possibly save them”

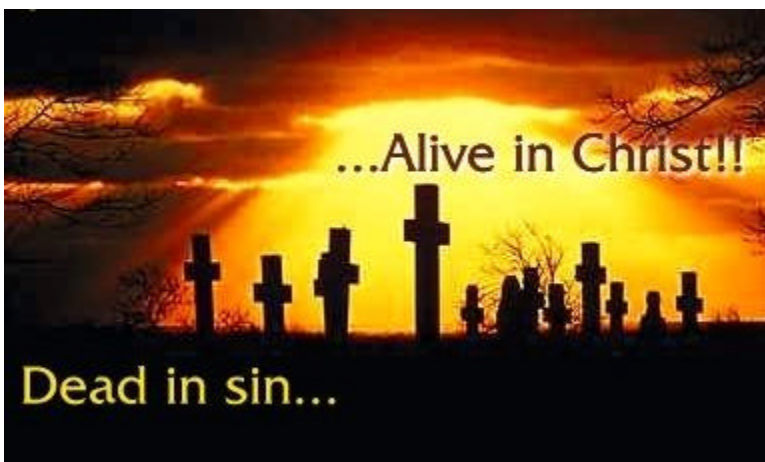
But before you dismiss the possibility of Payton and Courtney receiving Spiritual Life in baptism, consider this.

God delights in confounding what makes sense to us.

Life... even Spiritual Life springs forth in surprising ways to surprising people in surprising places.

Now understand this... we have many brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we will spend eternity who look at this issue differently than we do as Lutherans. And we don't mean to disparage them on this point.

But so much of what we hear on this subject is from other view points, that it is good occasionally to be reminded of why we believe what we believe.



First of all, we believe the scriptures that make it clear that we are born in sin and that all sin brings about death.

Children are born with a sinful nature. Children are born with a desperate need for the salvation that is found in Christ alone.

David said: "Surely I was sinful from birth, from the time my mother conceived me."

"All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God."

Secondly we believe that God's promises are for our children as well as for adults.

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Peter explained what happens at baptism when he said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

But he did not restrict this teaching to adults. He added, "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him" (2:39).

Luke records: "Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God'" (Luke 18:15–16).

In Colossians 2:11-12 Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision. In that passage, he refers to baptism as "the circumcision of Christ" and "the circumcision made without hands."

If Paul meant to exclude infants, would he have chosen circumcision (something that ordinarily occurred on the eighth day of life) as a parallel for baptism?

Lydia was converted by Paul's preaching and "She was baptized, with her household" (Acts 16:15).

The Philippian jailer whom Paul and Silas had converted to the faith was baptized that night along with all of his family (Acts 16:33).

Paul recalled that, "I did baptize also the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor. 1:16).

Thirdly we have the witness of the early church:

Augustine said, "The custom of ...baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned . . . nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything

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except apostolic"

Polycarp (69-155), a disciple of the Apostle John, was baptized as an infant. This enabled him to say at his martyrdom. "Eighty and six years have I served the Lord Christ"

Other early church leaders who spoke in favor of infant baptism include:

Justin Martyr

Irenaeus

Origen

Cyprian

Only one church father took issue with infant baptism and that because of a heretical view that it is best to be baptized as close to the time of death as possible because of his fear of unforgivable post baptismal sin. He never question the validity of infant baptism.

It wasn't until the Anabaptists in the 1520s that the Christian Church experienced opposition specifically to infant Baptism.

Some say that there is no explicit example of an infant baptism in scripture... but neither does the Bible gives one example of the baptism of a child raised in a Christian home and then baptized as an adult.

Some would say that there is no way that an infant can "believe and be baptized"... but David said:

Ps. 22:9 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast.

We misunderstand the nature of faith when we confine it to "reason".

Faith is not merely a product of reason but relation. It is a relationship of

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love and trust, a relationship which is not limited to the mind.

If you are still troubled with the idea of infant baptism, answer these questions:

Why are there no protests against the validity of infant baptism from anyone in the early Church?

Where is anything found in Scripture that expressly forbids the baptism of infants or children?

Where does Scripture prescribe any age for baptism?

I don't remember my first birth... does that make it invalid?

I don't remember my second birth... does that make it invalid?

Where in Scripture does it say that children are free from the effects of the Fall simply because they are not old enough to reason?

If it was the norm to baptize children at a later age, why is there no evidence in Scripture or early Church history of instruction given to parents on how to help their adolescent children prepare for baptism?

Infant Baptism, more than any other act of the Church, expresses the essence of the Christian faith and the love of our Triune God.

Infant Baptism gives expression to the truth that we have been saved by grace alone, apart from works. Infant Baptism is God's love made concrete and real.

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Life springs forth in surprising places, in surprising ways, to surprising people... because we have a surprising and awesome God.

Amen.