

The Sunday before I left for vacation...I preached about anticipating the experience of becoming a *grandfather*. And now, my first Sunday back, I *am* a grandfather! *Ruthie Virginia Smith* was born in Asheville NC, a day earlier than expected, on July 28th, and mother and child are doing well.

Not only that, but my wife *Jennifer* now has a new puppy named "Sunday". So, Jennifer and I are both going to be insufferable for a while--with *baby and puppy* pictures and stories ready! :)

When I was anticipating the birth of *Ruthie* back in July, I talked to you about how that was bringing to me a *vaguely different sense of things...an awareness of the passage of time...of belonging to a generation within the great sweep of time*. And reflecting upon the story of Abraham and Sarah in the Bible, I talked about how it then becomes a question for grandparents *of whether we are ready to trust God...with the grandchildren that may come to us...and all of their future life which will ultimately be beyond our reach*.

This kind of question, within the experience of grandparents, is really the question that the Bible challenges *all of us* with: *Are we ready to trust God with the lives of the people we hold dear...with our lives...and the life of the world?*

There is one sense, of course, in which we don't have any choice...*all* our lives belong to *God*...and all that happens to us will somehow be within the providence of God. This is true whether we trust in God or not.

But to actually venture to trust in God...is different...and it is a choice...and it makes a difference if we can arrive at a place of our own trusting in God.

There are times in our lives when that can be very hard, for all kinds of reasons. There are times when it can feel like a difficult intellectual endeavor. There can be times when our hearts are broken and they close off to God. And other times when we are just too distracted to be able to turn our attention toward anything other than the things of this world.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Sometimes "the renewing of our minds", and hearts, can be easier than at other times. There can be moments that come, when the space between God and you becomes very thin, when something opens up, and your heart opens up, even if your mind doesn't quite know what to do with it yet.

When I first walked into that hospital room and saw *Ruthie* with her mother *Catherine*...when I first saw my son *Ian* hold *Ruthie*...when I held *Ruthie* myself...those were thin spaces...sacred...and good.

I do wonder...as no doubt you have...what kind of world are we bringing children into...and what's going to happen next? And it does fill me with some anxiety for her. And I wonder things like: Am *I* doing all I can to make the world better. Are *we* doing all we can? Well, there isn't an easy answer.

But I am inspired now in a new way...to imagine trusting...that the God of little *Ruthie*...and the God of our new little puppy *Sunday*...is a God who delights in such little beings...and us...and is good...better than we are...inspiring us to be better than we are.