

Sermon for Ruth Haller's funeral 22 February 2021 @ Johnson Funeral Home/ Loch Raven Blvd/
Baltimore

Quiet. Kind. Always at church, until the last couple of years..

Buck points out her photograph in the church's 1930's panoramic shot. "She's in the cradle roll."

Part of Bethesda all her life ...

At times like this, we each have our own thoughts ... I suggest we can become as little children, as Jesus puts it, and in our imagination come closer to the kingdom of heaven.

Scripture says many things, some seeming in opposition to others ... With the help of the Holy Spirit, may we grow a little better at allowing ourselves the freedom of a little child in confronting the great mystery of dying and being born anew, letting our thoughts roam in this time, like little children ...

What if the kingdom of heaven is already among us? Jesus says it is. The good is alive and well and with us... We can trust, and hope, and relax in that attitude, learning day by day new capacity to love and be beloved.

What if beginnings and endings are not so final as we try to make them as grown-ups?

What if the good news is very much among us, gathered here alongside Ruth? Saying good-bye we do here ... but we also welcome one another into a larger fellowship with her at this time.

Sadness is here, and gratitude as well .. We're closing a chapter, but not a book.

Friendship, good influence, helpful memories and examples, are not gone.

Even responsibility is still alive in this situation: We wouldn't want to lessen the good example Ruth has given us, in many ways, in how to live, how to love, how to abide among friends.

For ourselves, and those around us day by day, the same things still matter. Work for the good. Try to be fair. Sometimes surprise one another at the positive effect we have, as Ruth also has.

Resurrection is a big word ... Maybe it means still going on, even expanding, like the universe ...

In so many ways, we are urged by Scripture to imagine good, loving, lasting fellowship with an unbelievably trustworthy Source of everything... "I am that I am;" "Lo, I am with you always..." "Follow me..." "Become as a little child..."

In Ruth's case, I do want to single out Buck as a gift and inspiration as care-giver. He will tease me about putting him on the spot ... "You said that," he'll say ... but thanks be to God for

this companionship that stretches 'way back into family history and enriches us in the Bethesda Church fellowship as well as the larger neighborhood and community.

And each of you here, in your own way, has offered and extended and respected and enjoyed Ruth, who is so much more in the bosom of God's love than anyone can describe, going on to more glory ... Thank you all...

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, you have taught us how to speak. We have followed the hints you give, in ways past seeing or hearing... Thank you for being among us, bringing us to life, in this time of grieving and saying good-bye... Help us to trust Ruth is well, and rewarded and made alive in new ways, in a life well-directed by your spirit. Take our words and thoughts and blend them into a celebration, and use our imagination to secure us, and improve us, and enlarge our experience with you and all creation.

Amen.