**10/7/18 Sermon**

**Gospel Reading Mark 10:2-16**

Parents are supposed to teach kids, but kids teach their parents a lot too.

A young mother wrote about the things her son taught her:

I’ve learned you shouldn’t toss baseballs up, inside, when the ceiling fan is on.

I’ve learned the double-pained glass in the window, will not stop a baseball which was hit by a ceiling fan.

I’ve learned the motor on the ceiling fan isn’t strong enough to rotate a 42-pound boy, wearing a superman cape, hanging by a dog leash.

I’ve learning when you hear the toilet flush, followed by the words: ‘uh oh’ it’s already too late.

My son has taught me that the spin cycle on a washing machine can make a cat very dizzy.

I also learned a dizzy cat can throw up two or three times its body weight.

Mostly my son has taught me you can only survive parenthood with a sense of humor, and a lot of love.

Children can drive their parents crazy, day after day.

They think differently from the way we do.

Yet Jesus says in order to enter God’s Kingdom we must think like a child.

The disciples tried to protect Jesus from the nuisance of little children.

After all, Jesus was a busy man.

He had people to heal, demons to cast out, important people to talk to.

And these were just little kids.

They weren’t important. They couldn’t contribute. They had no influence.

They were nice (and all that) but they weren’t worth Jesus’ time.

And so, the disciples tried to shoo them away.

Yet, Jesus set a little child in the midst of His disciples.

He took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Jesus told them: The kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

While the disciples viewed children as trivial, Jesus welcomed them.

These little children didn’t have anything to offer but themselves.

No riches, no religion, no power, no prestige, no position.

They don’t try to buy God’s love. They know they cannot earn it.

They accept that they do not deserve it.

They simply have a childlike faith in a Divine Friend.

Children know they are totally dependent upon their parents for survival.

They are unable to provide for themselves.

Children by nature are trusting, living life without worry.

They don’t know where the food comes from,

but they trust it will be there when it’s time to eat.

They are unaware of the money it takes to live, or what is involved in making a living; they just expect that their needs will be provided.

The same is true regarding salvation.

We are totally dependent upon the Lord to provide for us.

We are unable to secure our salvation, and even have a difficult time comprehending the enormity of it all.

All we can do is simply believe and trust in God’s love for salvation, and rest in His gracious provision.

Grown-ups often believe children are unable to understand and relate to God.

So many try to hinder children from coming to Jesus because they think the children are too young, and disruptive.

We shouldn’t measure a child’s capacity for believing by our own experience.

Our job as adults is simply to help the young ones to encounter Jesus, and experience his love.

Two fathers were discussing this very topic.

One man talked about how important it was to teach his children about the truths of the Bible.

The other man disagreed and said he wanted his children to grow up with no spiritual instruction, and make up their own minds.

It was clear they weren’t going to convince each other.

Finally, the father who believed in spiritual training changed the subject.

He said, “Would you care to see my garden?” The other man said, “Sure.”

They walked around the house,

and saw a patch of ground overgrown with weeds, thorns, and thistles.

The guest said, “Why that’s no garden, that’s just an overgrown weed bed.”

The owner said, “My philosophy of farming is that I never want to prejudice the soil in any way I don’t want to influence the soil with good seeds. I just let whatever is in the soil grow.”

His friend thought about what he said for several long moments.

Sheepishly he said: “Now I know why you think spiritual training of your children is a wise strategy. I think I have to change my ideas, and agree with you.”

We must come as a little child, realizing out inability, and trusting in God’s love.

The longer we live, the more we seem to lose our sense of awe and wonder we had as a child.

Remember when you were a child and sang?

 ‘Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so.’

It would be good to return to that time of awe and wonder, faith and trust.

We adults often make things too complicated.

Theology is deep, but we aren’t saved by theology.

We are saved by a simple trust in God.

When we were children, we didn’t worry about what we were going to wear, or eat, because our parents were going to provide for us.

That kind of absolute trust and confidence should be the way we relate to our Heavenly Father today.

He has told us that we don’t have to worry about any of these things.

He has promised to be with us always and will take care of us.

Children have a short memory and a spirit of forgiveness.

As adults, when someone injures or wrongs us, we are slow to forgive.

We tend to carry grudges often for many years.

Many of us can still remember people who have hurt us, and we still haven’t forgiven them.

We would rather cling to our disappointment and anger, than let them go.

But children are quick to forgive. They don’t carry grudges.

They can be fussing with their playmates, but in a few minutes they’re playing again.

Two 12-year old best friends got into a knockdown, drag-out fistfight with each other.

They were playing baseball and argued whether a ball was foul or fair.

They were yelling, and pretty soon, the fists were flying.

The coach pulled them apart, and the game was soon over.

Within ten minutes the 2 boys were drinking lemonade with their arms around each other.

The fight was completely forgotten.

If only we grown-ups could learn to forgive, and forget, as easily.

God calls us his children for a reason.

It is when we are most child-like that we come closest to our Heavenly Father.

A young 4-year old boy was struggling to learn the “Lord’s Prayer.”

Concentrating with all his strength he began:

“Our Father who art in Heaven… I know you know my name.”

Now, the child obviously mangled the verse.

But even in this misquoting of Scripture, he managed to get his theology right.

Because, to his childish mind, that is what God is all about, and he is right.

Sometimes, I think children’s mistakes are better than all the right words we adults offer to God.

It helps when we can forget about our pride and our self-sufficiency, and put our trust in him.

When it comes to children, Jesus accepts them because He loves them.

And when it comes to sinners, Jesus accepts us because He loves us.

The disciples thought Jesus needed protection from bothersome children.

But Jesus points out that children need protection from bumbling adults.

God is real to children because they encounter him with childlike faith.

They don’t doubt his existence.

They find it easy to trust him for the best.

But as we grow older, pride takes over.

We become skeptical of anything beyond our experience.

We find it hard to trust someone else.

Jesus wasn’t trying to teach the children when he took them in his arms,

or set them in the midst of his disciples.

Jesus was trying to teach the disciples, and us,

how important it is to come to him like a child, with a child-like faith.

That is not always easy to do. It requires childlike humility, and trust, and love.

Yet it is faith which sees the invisible,

believes the incredible,

and receives the impossible.

If only we grown-ups can become more like children,

God’s own cherished children.

What a difference it would make in our lives.

AMEN