

10/07/2018

“As A Little Child”

Scripture: Mark 10:13-16

World Communion Sunday

In a world full of brokenness (lives, home, communities, nations) Jesus reminds us that we must believe with the simple faith and trust of a child to receive or enter God’s kingdom.

Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV)

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

I so enjoy attending the Trinity Preschool Chapel on Wednesday mornings. I am blessed by the enthusiasm and loving instruction of Ms. Deidra and the other leaders. It’s a joy just to watch and sometimes participate with helping and encouraging the children in singing expressively, engaging in the bible story, and being able to lead the little ones in prayer, as they pray after me. And, I am especially blessed by their loving greetings, smiles, waves and occasional touch or hug.

I am often reminded of the words of Jesus just read, as well as others, which tell us to appreciate the gift and character of little children. As I’m sure you can tell, Jesus disagreed with the common view that children were less significant than others. Yes, they may not have the knowledge or understanding of many things as youths or adults do. They may need to learn a bit of restraint or how to better get along with others. Then again, so do some teens and adults. ☺

But they are just as important in the eyes of God.

Yes, some of what they ask or say can confound, even perhaps embarrass us. Yet, I believe the truth is that we can learn much from children. That’s one reason why I also enjoy having children’s time in worship. Remember how Jesus reminded some religious leaders and teachers of his day who wanted to silence the children when they shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David” as he entered Jerusalem. He told them, ***“Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?’”*** (Matthew 21:16b NIV)

What is it about little children that has most touched and taught or teaches you?

Perhaps, it is their expressed need for love, nurture, or security. Perhaps, it is their thirst for knowledge, or often eagerness to share their words and experiences. Perhaps, it is the honest answers they often give to questions they’re not sure of. Or perhaps, it is their childlike faith and trust. Indeed, sometimes it is the children who lead their parents to Jesus Christ.

All the more reasons to love and protect them, to acknowledge and receive them as part of God’s family and ours.

Let me share a witness with you from Gloria Gaither (from Christina Herald Magazine) a number of years ago. It's called "My Child, My Teacher, My Friend":

" . . . It wasn't long . . . until your cooing turned inquisitive, with every babbled sentence ending with a question mark. Your first words were: 'What's that? What's that?' Soon your questing vocabulary grew, and you were begging, 'Teach me something, Mommy. Teach me something.'

"And I would stop to teach you numbers, names of things, textures, shapes, sizes, foods, furniture, pets, trees, flowers, stars and clouds. But soon you were teaching me. . . teaching that when the lesson stopped, the learning kept on going.

"You taught me to see the miracles I'd stumbled over every day. You taught me trust and delight and ecstasy. You held a mirror before my attitudes, and role-played all my reactions. You taught me what it meant to live what I verbalized, to believe what I preached, to internalize what I lectured.

You taught me what Jesus meant when he said we must become like children, if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. Through you I understood why he used a metaphor of birth for the truth of conversion. For you, who came to me all wet from birth, baptized the common things with natural freshness, and, with the shower of your laughter, washed away the barnacles of grown-up cynicism and the dust of dull routine. You made things new. You gave me an excuse to be myself again, to skip down forest trails or sled the frozen hillsides clean with snow, to splash through springtime puddles, barefoot glad, and guess at where the shooting stars must go.

You gave me eyes to see the realness of people once again, to look beyond their faces' thin facades. You saw the child inside the aged, the longing and the passion long entrapped by gnarled joints and failing eye-sight. You recognized profundity and wisdom in the giggly teen-age baby sitter, beauty in the plain, and creativity in the timid. You showed me that the generation gap is the artificial invention of our culture and bigotry a sick perversion of God's celebration of variety . . ."

What a beautiful and powerful witness.

Yes, "***Let the little children come to me;***" Jesus said, "***do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.***" And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

This coming Friday through next Sunday is observed by our denomination as Children's Sabbath, to celebrate children and to pray for those living in poverty throughout the world. It's a time to reflect on God's gift of children and ways congregations and individuals can renew their commitment to care for, protect and advocate for all children.

As we come to the table of Holy Communion of our Lord, let us reflect upon the words of Jesus heard today, and this short video, as we celebrate World Communion Sunday.

<https://youtu.be/mGbag-XJ5Uk>

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Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

What is it about little children that has most touched and taught or teaches you?

Why do you think the disciples did not want the parents to bring their children to Jesus?

How would you have felt as a parent? As Jesus? As one of the disciples before and after Jesus “corrected” them?

How can/do we bring and receive the little children to Jesus?

How have we, or do we, come to him ourselves?