



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This week's Gospel lesson from Matthew breaks cleanly into two separate parts. The first is about believing and the second is about acting. And so, we begin with Jesus talking about how most people of his day did not believe that he was the Messiah. Nor did they believe John when he came as the one to prepare the way for Jesus. He was a bit rough around the edges and so I can forgive them their unbelief in this man who ate wild locusts and wore strange clothing. But what about Jesus? Oh yeah, he ate with sinners, talked to prostitutes, healed lepers. Humm.

Well, our text goes on to say that wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. And who can recognize such deeds. Children of course. They are the ones in on the secret. And we as adults should pay attention to how children perceive things and get rid of the idea that we know everything because we are wise, intelligent adults.

Children after all have a lot going for them. First off, they are teachable with absorbent minds. They are constantly learning about the world around them, much like a sponge soaking up water. Remember taking a walk with your children? Think back to how many times they bent over to pick up something off the sidewalk or grab a flower growing in the concrete cracks or point to a dog nearby. They noticed all kinds of things that we as adults just don't see because our minds are filled with worries.

Also, have you ever noticed how children cut right to the heart of the matter. They see something, sometimes a big issue and they report it with simplicity and candor. Children in their own right are great philosophers and the best theologians. They can find the center of an issue and have little trouble expressing it. I will never forget one Christmas when the kids were little. Leigh was probably about 5 or 6. She opened a gift from her Aunt Sandy, and it was a pair of decorator jeans. She held them up and ungraciously said, "Who on earth would wear red jeans!" and threw them on the floor. A moment Rodney and I would

have liked to crawl under the table for sure. But in her mind, jeans were to be blue, not red. And she spoke her mind.

Children thirdly, live by trust. They trust others to get them through to adulthood. At a young age they recognize that they have a lack of power but what they do understand is that they are loved. Dependent on adults for most things they do learn quickly, even before the teen years, how to use that love to manipulate adults for the things they want, but don't necessarily need. Children are just amazing.

During a time of drought in a Midwestern farm town, citizens were asked to come to a prayer service for rain and they were asked to bring a tangible expression of their faith. One adult brought a Bible, another brought a cross, and still another brought a picture of Jesus walking on water. But a little boy brought an umbrella. Need I say more?

So why are adults so different? Why do we make things so difficult? We lack the sense of wonder of the pedals of a flower or a rainbow after a storm. We think we are too sophisticated to speak what is really on our mind in fear of what others might think of us. You and I would have said, "Why Aunt Sandy thank you for the red jeans, how unique." And then returned them to the store. Plain and deep truths can be difficult to claim and explain. We, as adults also have a world view that often does not allow us to trust with our hearts because of our heads getting in the way.

So do you see why Jesus mentions children and sees adults as not being able to believe things about himself and John. He wants for us to be able to see and learn and love with a clarity like that of children. And just maybe some of us are back there again. Maybe that is why there is so much grey hair in the pews this morning. Think about how we relate to our grandchildren. Often times we seem to be on the same track of what is important while the parents seem clueless or unaware. Grandparents have become young again. Good news, right? Worries of the world do not seem so important when seeing life through the eyes of grandchildren. Some even say that we start life off in diapers and end life the same way. And I wonder if that is such an awful thing. Seeing Jesus through a child's eyes is not all bad. But in fact, very special.

Getting old does not mean that we have to give up everything we know and love. The truth about Christian living is that we were baptized into a death like Jesus. So, dying in order to rise like him is what that means. And as we face both little and big things in our life, we must learn to trust that they are all part of God's plan. Only in that way can we have a new life each and every day. We are then no longer consumed with fear for tomorrow as it will bring a new life all its own. We come to know then what is really important, what really matters. We learn from living one day at a time with Jesus walking beside us. God not only promises eternal life but also abundant life here on earth. That folks is what we have to learn and to trust in God's promise. Just like a child would. Our father in heaven will never steer us wrong. Because He sent Jesus with the antidote to worldly disbelief.

Love of God and love of neighbor are the mantra of the New Testament. It is not clever, nor is it hard to remember. The Old testament had 10 commandments, but now we need only

remember these two that cover all of life. It is not complicated by the Old Testament Jewish laws. In fact, even children can relate. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

And if you live by those two standards of Christian life and make them your life, it will work for you. You will then know the grace of God. And that power dwarfs all the other powers on earth. Our Gospel reading concludes, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." How much plainer can that be.

No genius needed here to see God's hand in this. Just open your heart and have a will to believe. Christ invites us to believe. Even some of the world's greatest thinkers, believed. From Galileo to Newton to Einstein, they all saw God's hand in the order of the universe. Order is found in a flower reaching for the warmth of the sun and a baby longing for mother's milk and touch. We too are drawn to God through the love and the sacrificial life of Jesus Christ.

I hope you will embrace him as your Savior. Don't be afraid to trade a clever life for a committed one, a grasping life for a giving one, a short and tragic life for a blessed, brand new, abundant, and eternal life. God after all, brings life out of death and makes old hearts young again. He replaces our adult anxiety with a wisdom available to whomever welcomes Him into their hearts. Jesus said, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." You will never have a better offer than that! So, take it, grab on to the joy of a child and savor every moment. AMEN