**SUNDAY 10/3/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 10:2-16**

When Marilyn and Scott arrived at church Sunday morning

 they were greeted by Laura, one of the women

 who took care of the children in the nursery.

"Marilyn, could you help with the young children this morning?" she asked.

 "Three of our helpers are out sick, and won't be here today.

 We are really short-handed."

Marilyn answered: "I sorry, I'm singing with the choir today."

Scott hesitated, but said: "I can help, if you tell me what to do."

Laura looked a little doubtful, but she was desperate.

Leading the way to the nursery, she explained the basics to Scott.

As they entered the room filled with children, the chaos was a bit overwhelming.

Laura went to one corner of the room

 and began to talk with a few of the youngsters.

Scott looked around wondering what he ought to do.

Finally, he walked to an empty area in the room and sat down on the floor.

Immediately some of the children joined him.

They sat down and started talking to him.

Scott listened and joined in their conversation.

He asked questions, and answers theirs.

Then he told them short Bible stories.

They sang songs, and before Scott realized it,

 worship was finished and the parents

 started coming into the nursery to gather their young children.

When Marilyn arrived, she asked how he had managed with all the little children.

"I had a great time," he answered. "I enjoyed it, and I might do this more often.

 "The children really seemed to like talking with someone

 who was listening to them."

Children have a wisdom and understanding

 which surprises many adults.

They know the difference between

 someone who is really listening and caring about them,

 rather than simply being there.

They know when they are noticed, and welcome.

People had gathered around Jesus to hear what He was teaching them.

Many brought their young children so Jesus could touch them and bless them.

But the disciples were angry and upset.

The people were distracting the Master.

They were wasting the teacher's time.

When the disciples spoke sternly to them, and tried to shoo them away,

 they believed they were being helpful to Jesus.

The disciples were adamant that Jesus had no time for such activity,

 and strongly scolded the parents for wasting His time

 with what they assumed were trivial matters.

They did not think the children were important at all.

But Jesus was angry.

He told them to let the little children come to Him.

They weren't wasting His time.

The kingdom of God is where the children ought to be,

 it belongs to them.

Jesus criticized the disciples,

 the ones who had followed Him,

 and learned from Him,

 and were supposed to be teaching others.

Jesus gathered the children around Him,

 His voice was gentle and He treated them with kindness,

 He was gracious to them,

 He treated them with respect,

 and laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

And the disciples were confused.

We grown-ups are often as confused as the disciples.

It seems backward for the children to be important, instead of the adults.

While the disciples viewed children as trivial,

 Jesus believed they were important, and welcomed them.

He began to teach that child-like faith was important,

 and began to teach that adults would do well to imitate them.

If we grown-ups don't come to God as little children, we might never find Him.

We need to have faith like a little child,

 trusting God loves us, and forgives us, and will guide us.

It was on a cold, snowy Sunday morning in New Jersey.

A ten-year-old boy struggled through the wind and snow to attend worship.

When the visiting pastor walked out,

 he saw that the boy was the only person in the church.

The boy sat silently in the pew, wondering what the Minister would do.

Would the Pastor send him away because he was the only one there?

Had he come all this way for nothing?

But when it was time for worship, the pastor walked into the pulpit.

He began the service as if the church were filled to capacity.

He looked at the boy with a smile of great sincerity,

 and he spoke earnestly about the love of God.

When the time came for the offering,

 the minister held out the offering plate,

 and the boy walked to the front and placed his nickel in the plate.

The pastor smiled at the boy, and placed his big, gentle hand on his head.

He cared enough to show him God's love,

 even when he was the only one at church.

As the boy walked back to his seat,

 he knew he was loved and he mattered to God.

And it made all the difference in the boy's life as he grew to adulthood.

Children are always watching, they watch and listen

 to parents, grandparents, teachers.

Their words can either draw them closer to the Lord, or drive them farther away.

 R.L. Sharpe wrote:

Isn't it strange that princes and kings;

And clowns that caper in sawdust rings;

And common folk like you and me;

Are the builders of eternity?

To each is given a bag of tools,

A shapeless mass and a book of rules;

And each must make, ‘ere time is flown,

A stumbling-block or a stepping-stone."

When it comes to children, we should make sure we are building stepping-stones,

 not placing stumbling blocks in their way.

Children have a great sense of awe, and wonder, and trust.

No wonder the can sing with confidence:

 "Jesus loves me this I know.

 For the Bible tells me so.

 Little ones to him belong.

 They are weak but He is strong.

 Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so."

We grown-ups can learn a lot from young children.

Become like a little child in God's eyes.

After all, He is our Heavenly Father,

 so we are His children.

Climb up on Jesus' lap.

And receive a blessing of eternal life.

A simple, childlike faith makes all the difference.

A childlike faith understands and believes in a God

 who can do anything,

 see anything,

 and be everywhere.

Unfortunately, as we grow older we tend to forget those simple facts.

Then it is time to pause and come close to God once again.

AMEN