

Let the Little Children Come

[Mark 10:2-16](#)

It seems like today's scripture lesson is actually three lessons. Don't worry, I won't be preaching three times as long! The first two lessons focus on marriage and divorce. We could talk for weeks on that one and I am sure the scripture is a little confusing. The one thing I will say is that of all the weddings I have been a part of, no bride or groom I've known goes into marriage with the assumption that it will only be for a short time and then they would move on. Every couple I have talked with, as their pastor or wedding singer or matron of honor, has gone into marriage with the idea that it would be forever. God also has that intention. We know that plans don't always work out as we hoped, but we will leave that as a topic for another day.

I wanted to focus on the third lesson in today's gospel scripture. The scripture tells us that people were bringing

children to Jesus so he could bless them. Jesus was interested in welcoming children, yet the norm of society for that day was to ignore them. I think it helps to understand the context for this scripture. It is hard for those of us in this time to recognize a practice where children are virtually non-existent. They simply were not considered important at all. It went beyond the policy of children being seen and not heard – children were just not a part of society.

If you recall the story of Jesus in the temple as a 12-year old boy, you can probably imagine the astonishment of the elders there as Jesus was basically including himself with the rest of the men. From the very start, Jesus was introducing a new idea – children matter and should be included as part of the lives of adults.

Those of us living in the here and now are probably finding this a very difficult concept to grasp. How could anyone ignore their children? How could children simply be seen as a nuisance? We value our children. We are concerned for their welfare. We want them to be involved in every facet of family life. Even those of you who do not have children are probably familiar with those who do and how much children are valued as a part of our society.

I do know that not all children benefit from the blessings and security of being raised in a loving family. While it is true that not every child grows up being valued in their family, for the most part as a society we do tend to place a high value on our children and want the best for them. We want to keep them safe and happy throughout their lives.

So Jesus has a dual message for us today. “Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” This is the first part of the message – we are to value our children. As we are caring for our children, let us not forget to teach them about their Maker. Let us not forget that the Son of God came to earth for children too. Let us help our children to grow physically, mentally, and spiritually by our collective example.

The second part of Jesus’ message concerns us. “Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” I think a great way to illustrate this concept is to bow to the master storyteller, Hans Christen Andersen. You may be familiar with his little story known as ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes.’ The gist of the story is about a vain emperor who needed new clothes, as he changed his clothes

quite frequently – the story says he changed his clothes every hour. Two very smooth swindlers make contact with the emperor and promised to make a cloth for him that had special powers. The cloth would be invisible to anyone who was stupid or not fit for his/her post. Since the swindlers were appealing to the emperor's vanity, the emperor quickly agreed and paid them a handsome advance, because the feature of the cloth would immediately tell the emperor who was unworthy of his/her post.

The story goes on with the swindlers demanding the finest silk and gold threads for the cloth, yet the threads remained in their bags while they pretended to weave cloth on their looms.

The emperor became a little worried as he considered what would happen if he too could not see the cloth. So he sent his most trusted minister to check on the progress. Of course, as there was nothing being weaved the minister could not see

anything but did not want to admit it, so he reported back to the emperor of how beautiful the cloth was and how pleased the emperor would be.

Of course the day comes when the emperor, so convinced of the lie, adorns himself in the imaginary garment and sets out on a parade in front of all of his subjects. Everyone could see the emperor was naked but no one would speak up. They continued to make glowing references of the fine material and brilliant colors, because no one wanted to be found unworthy or stupid. It was a little child who finally spoke the truth. “The emperor is naked!” The child was not concerned for his position or image. The child simply saw the truth for what it was.

Perhaps we too need to receive the love of God for ourselves as little children. Our station in life is not important, only the condition of our hearts. Have we accepted God’s grace

for ourselves? Have we trusted God with our fears and doubts and sought to listen to God's will for our lives? Have we reached out to our neighbors in need? Are we sharing God's love with others?

As we come to our time of communion today, we come with an understanding that today is World Communion Sunday. Many around the world join us today as we celebrate the life of Jesus as the Son of God. We know that many around the world are lacking the basic necessities of life, and we join in prayer for a bigger world outside of our doors. Let us spend some time in prayer today as we seek to listen to God's will for our lives as individuals and as a congregation. And let us turn our prayers to action as we seek to help those in need both near and far. Today is a celebration for us on many levels – Hayden was baptized and welcomed into Christ's holy church. We welcome her

family and pledge to support them on their spiritual journey.

And we come together in communion with one another to share in Christ's holy meal. Let us remember that we serve a God who cares for our needs both great and small. God is good – all the time. Amen.