

Faith Is Like A Child

Mark 10:13-16

Our text this morning is a fitting follow-up to the gospel lesson two weeks ago where we talked about true greatness. Well you remember that Jesus took a child and said told his disciples that the path to greatness to welcome a child. He lifts up those who welcome children. Now fast forward into Mark 10, just a chapter later we find people bringing little children to Jesus. It was customary for people to bring their children to rabbis to be blessed. Remember, people basically considered Jesus to be a rabbi—but not just an ordinary rabbi. Well at the beginning of these verses the disciples appear to have missed Jesus' point and so they try to shoo the away. They rebuked the parents.

After all Jesus was talking about adult issues—he was talking about divorce. He was in the middle of something important. Maybe they thought, he shouldn't be disturbed by trivial things—you know, like children. They saw these children as interruption to the life of this busy man. They assumed that Jesus don't have time for children. They were wrong. According to Mark in v.14 ¹⁴*When Jesus saw this, he was indignant.* Jesus was incensed by their gesture.

And so Jesus used this as an opportunity to teach his disciples. He used this situation to teach them that children are important. And then he said to them further in v.14 *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.* Well, what did he mean by that? That the kingdom of God belongs to children? Well, Jesus further clarified that in the next verse. ¹⁵*I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

What can you and I learn from a child? It is this—a child holds the key to the kingdom of God. Jesus says if you don't receive God's kingdom like a child you're not gonna get in—that's how important it is. Well we go further, what is the kingdom God anyway? It connotes the sovereign rule of God.

Jesus says we need to be like little children to be part of God's rulership. Just to clarify, we are not being told to be childish here. Paul even mentions in Ephesians that we should no longer be like children, carried by false doctrines. So how can we receive the kingdom like a child, but then avoid being childish? What can we learn from a little child? We may learn a lot of things from them, but one of them is this...

1. Simple Trust

When you tell a child "I'm going to do this for you." Well you make sure you're gonna do it. Why? It's because they'll trust you! They'll believe you're going to that for them. They get excited about it. And maybe won't be able to sleep just thinking about it. And so if you don't fulfill what you promised, you'll definitely break the child's hearts.

Children don't doubt at all. When they trust it's going to be complete trust. They don't have trust issues. Well if ever a little child has a trust issue that tells a lot about the adults she or he grows up with. But normally for children, it's easy for them to believe about Santa Claus or the tooth

fairy. When you're little daughter loses a tooth and you tell her she better put that under her pillow so the tooth fairy will replace that with money. Is she going to look at you with great disbelief? Is she going to say, "did you bump your head or something?" No! She'll just do it. Why? because you said so and therefore it should be true.

Church children don't dabble or experiment with conspiracy theories. They don't have a hermeneutics of suspicion. That is look at things, events or people with suspicion. Well, my daughter, yeah well she's generally shy when we have a visitor in the parsonage. But give her about thirty minutes—she'll be on that person, climbing that person's back in no time... That's parents always remind their children not to go with strangers—it's just so easy for them trust.

Jesus is essentially telling his disciples, "I want you to have a childlike trust in God." Similarly, Jesus is also challenging us to have that childlike trust in God. When God says he will do something. Let's believe that God will do it. It doesn't necessarily mean that situations have to look perfect. "Why do bad things happen to good people?" We see it happen and sometimes people make that as an excuse. Church, faith is not the absence of questions or even doubts. Faith is really choosing to believe despite of those questions and doubts. You choose to embrace God's promise because you know that your knowledge is very limited and that God—our parent sees more than we do. God knows what's best for us and therefore all we need to do is trust him. Yes there's this trust that comes with being a child, but there's also a second thing that we can learn from a little child. It is this...

2. Total Dependence

A child has to depend on an adult for food, for the clothes they wear, the house that they live in and whole list of other things. Children depend on adults for things in some way or another. For Ilana, this dependence feels like 24/7 for us. We're busy doing this thing and then she comes to us for her cheerios, for marshmallows, for her book, her toys, her dvds, and for diaper change.

I know for parents, this can be too tiring, but it's also rewarding. To see this little human being depend on you and trusting you for needs—and that's a blessing. Yes sometimes we do get annoyed because were just stressed out, but at the end of the day you realize it's all just worth it. And so we have to savor the moment—because children grow fast. The more they grow the more independent they become. But as for little children, they're supposed to depend on adults—they're wired to do that.

Well you and I depend on God in more ways than we can possibly imagine. We may think we earned it, We're the ones who put the clothes on our backs, but who gave us the strength and the energy to earn so that those clothes can be on our backs? The truth be told—God's is the one who created us. God made us. Sometimes people have this illusion that they're "self-made" and this is like playing with fire. It's a dangerous path to take.

Church, the more we depend on ourselves, the less we depend on God. And the less I depend on God, the less I'm like a child able to receive God's kingdom, God's plan and rulership for my life. There's just something refreshing about realizing that yes God allows me to participate in what I do for him. But everything I do I do it in the spirit of depending on him.

This feels just like Ilana, yes she's learning to do things on her own. Play with her toys, entertain herself, but she don't drift far away from us. She makes sure that we are close by. She's always wants to be on the same room with us. There's that constant awareness in her that makes her want to be close to us all the time. Jesus said in John 15:5. ⁵*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

Church, to be childlike means to be constantly dependent with the true vine. Yes, a child receives in dependence but there's another principle. It is this...

3. Extreme Humility

Church, children don't think about place, pride prestige, position and titles. They don't say "don't forget to call me by my right title." "You have to honor me above the other person." Well you can put a child from a rich family and poor child together in a playground and they will surely play share the facilities together without worrying about status. It's interesting to note that its easier for children to get together than adults do.

We adults are often wired to think that the more prestige we have, the more perks and privileges we deserve. As a result, we generally end up delegating more. "Fix the faucet?" Been there, I'm not gonna do that anymore!" "Wash my car? Been there, I'm not gonna do that anymore!" "Clean my house? Been there, I'm not gonna do that anymore!" The list just grows year after year. Isn't it?

Church, Jesus beckons us to recovering that simple humility we had as children. There's something about the humility of a child. That realizes that this has been given to me not because I deserve it but because somebody loves me. That's the humility I want to live in my life. That's the kind of humility that enjoys God's kingdom. That God gives to us not because we deserve. How can we deserve God's kingdom? God gives to us because he loves us. That's the humility that you walk with in life. Receive the kingdom like a child, and I'm sure if we do that, we'll be able to do great things in life.

There's this story about a group of Rabbis who just finished a semester in school together. One of them suggested that they celebrate with a little wine and even offered to pay for the wine. But here's the problem nobody wanted to go to make the purchase. Finally, the grand-Rabbi, their teacher said, 'just hand me the money, I know a young boy who will be glad to go.' After waiting for a long time, their teacher finally returned with the wine, and it became obvious to them that the elder himself, had gone and performed the errand. The Rabbi explained: "I didn't mislead you at all. You see, many people outgrow their youth and become old men. I have never let the spirit of my youth depart. And as I grew older, I always took along with me that 'young boy' I had been. It was that young boy in me that did that errand."

Church, if we are going to enter the kingdom of God, let's take that little child that is in us. Let's reactivate it! Let us have simple trust, total dependence and extreme humility. Let us pray...

Lord we thank you for reminding us today what it takes to enter your kingdom. Forgive us for looking in other places and failing to realize that what it all takes is a child. Lord help us revisit—help us tap once again in that little child that is inside of us. Enable us to have a childlike faith in you. Help us to focus with wonderful abandon in the truth that you love us and to put my faith in you as a little child. Help us to have simple trust in you, empower us to have total dependence on you and make us have that extreme humility realizing that all we are is because of you and because of our own credentials or merits. Lord today we commit ourselves to enter your kingdom as your little children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.