

“A Generous Invitation to Become Like the Least”

Message by DD Adams
Kemptown Providence U.M. Church
20th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
World Communion Sunday
October 7, 2018

The gospel lesson is taken from Mark, chapter 10, verses 13 through 16.

¹³People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless them. But the disciples scolded them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, “Allow the children to come to me. Don’t forbid them, because *God’s kingdom belongs to people like these children.* ¹⁵I assure you that whoever doesn’t welcome God’s kingdom like a child will never enter it.” ¹⁶Then he hugged the children and blessed them. This is God’s word for God’s people.

Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, teach and encourage us to embrace your words. Capture our naive behaviors that show us our need for Mother/Father God. Convince us to embrace your words without doubt or suspicion. Show us what it means to trust like a child so we might enter your kingdom. Draw us close to you today, so we might become more like Jesus as you continue to shape and mold our hearts with your living hands. Amen.

In the past few weeks in chapters 9 and 10 of Mark there were two verses that jumped into my heart. The first verse we talked about two Sundays ago—Mark 9:37. It reads like this, “Whoever welcomes one of these children in my

name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me isn't actually welcoming me but rather the one who sent me." Jesus says that when we embrace and receive a child it's like embracing God . . . and children were the "least."

In that day children weren't allowed to speak unless spoken to. Children were the powerless with no voice, but Jesus embraces them. Meanwhile, the disciples are arguing about who among them is the greatest, so Jesus continues to teach them about discipleship.

The second verse that jumped into my heart is from today's reading—Mark 10:15, "I assure you that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom *like a child* will never enter it." Not only in Jesus' day were children powerless and had no voice, but today as well there's millions of those in need *just like children* who are powerless and marginal.

They have no voice, and they're kept silent. For example, the disabled and the elderly are part of this group because they're on the margins of society. And those who are overpowered and mercilessly held for the pleasure of others. These are who Jesus calls the "least", and they live in countries all over the world.

Jesus sums up the marginalized and blesses them in Mark 10:14-16 and says the following, ". . . God's kingdom belongs *to people like these children*. I assure you that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never enter it." Then [Jesus] hugged the children and blessed them.

Those with no voice are misused and exploited because they're vulnerable—emotionally and physically. But here in *these* verses, Jesus is giving a generous invitation to all those who would receive him and those who are called “least”. Jesus gives a model a pattern for discipleship for what the word community means.

Jesus said to welcome the children, and he embraces and blesses them and says that “God’s kingdom belongs to people *like these children.*” Those on the margins, the elderly, the disabled, and the poor; this is a model for our discipleship. And now is the time in the message we might ask ourselves the question, “So what?” “What can we do to help?” “How can we make a difference in the lives of others facing tragedy and great need?”

There’s something about giving attention to and providing for the least among us that causes us to become like the least. When you give to those in need and welcome those who can give you nothing in return you become one with them on God’s behalf. In these passages, God is giving us a generous invitation to become like the least by practicing love and kindness and caring for the least and most vulnerable.

When Jesus welcomes and blesses the children and those on the margins, he’s living out and modeling his Father’s generous invite to embrace the least. And in doing so, we place ourselves in solidarity with them. For by embracing the marginalized we also receive an invite to God’s kingdom . . . we take on the qualities of the least. We as Christ followers take up the powerlessness and

vulnerability of the child. We in solidarity with the weak become vulnerable and completely reliant on the generous care and protection of Christ Jesus. So an invitation is given, but a response is required from us all. Perhaps we all should ask ourselves this. We have received the invitation, but are we acting in solidarity with those on the margins?

Please pray with me a prayer by St. Teresa of Avila found on the back of your bulletin. "Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours." God let us be what you would have us to be for the world. Amen.