

Deut. 6:4-9  
Mark 10:13-16

**To Such As These**  
Pastor Dennis Plourde

June 15, 2008

She was always the last one to give her prayer request. Others would share their joys or speak of needs and concerns. Some would give “mini” sermons of recent experiences. (Now I am sure none of you are prone to do that!) When all had finished and there was the last quiet before we would pray, her hand would raise and she would say only three words: ***“Remember the children.”***

Remember the children for to such as these belongs the kingdom of God. How do we remember the children? It is not as easy to answer as we would like to think. Congregations are not always supportive of children and youth. We served as youth advisors to a congregation in the late 60’s, the church had a full size gym as part of its complex. However, the trustees would not let us use the gym. They did not want any scuff marks on the quality floor they had installed. They chained the doors, literally, so that no one would walk on or play on the floor—it was a show piece. And then they wondered why the youth of the community had nothing to do and got into trouble.

We want children in our buildings but then complain about the noise or the mess. We remember the adage, “children should be seen and not heard.” And should not make messes. We call them the church of tomorrow when in reality they are also a part of the church of today.

When we look at the wider world, we have to ask why there are about 12 million children living on the edge of “hunger” in the United States today. Why should children in this country have to go to bed hungry? I was in a meeting in the last two weeks where one of the conversation pieces was about school vacation and how those children in the school lunch programs may not have any real meals for two plus months. The ones who rely on the free lunch program over the school year now for July and August will not have that available. The question was, “how can we serve this need?” We don’t have time to ask: what of the rest of the children of the world?

The disciples see the parents and their child bothering Jesus. He is too busy to be playing with or blessing children. After all they are just children. They want people to leave him alone and let him get some rest. Now, I don’t believe they are doing anything but looking out for Jesus. The days have been long; there are so many demands on him a few moments alone for rest is what is needed. They also need some rest and all these people, all these demands. Who has time to play with or to bless children?

Jesus is well aware of the teaching of Deuteronomy. He understands that children are a part of life, daily life. As you go about your daily activities, teach your children. Most children were not in school. They learned from mom and dad. Moses knows that as he gives God’s instructions to the people. When you walk, teach your child. When you rest, teach your child. Tell them the stories; use every opportunity to impart the wisdom of God in their lives. Let all of life be a learning experience. Honor the children and see in them hope and potential.

Jesus then takes one of the children and puts him/her on his lap. A young child came into the offices at Providence the other day. He was the child of one of the staff and everyone wanted to hold him. Now the problem was he had just discovered how to walk and the last thing he wanted was to be held. There were too many things to explore. But that did not deter many from wanting to hold him, to bless him. My image is of Jesus playing with the children, listening to them. Taking time to hear their stories. This was not a political photo opportunity. It was Jesus being Jesus. It was maybe more relaxing than a quiet time. It was seeing God’s kingdom again—all of God’s kingdom.

But not only does he take the child in his lap, he uses this as a “teaching” moment. If you really want to understand the kingdom of God you must become as a little child. And you must never stop them from coming, to such as these belongs the kingdom of God.

There are implications to become as a child. As I look at children these are some of the implications that I see:

**Acceptance:** Differences and prejudices are learned. We are not born with them. They are a product of our homes, our societies, our cultures. They are what we learn, not what we inherit from our DNA. And children have none. They accept anyone. Differences are hardly differences. Children accept almost anyone into their circle. They see beyond differences. To such as these belongs the kingdom of God.

**Trust:** Children have to be taught not to trust. Our boys grew up in the church. They had tons of aunts, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers. They would go off with anyone. After all we are all family. It is unfortunate but in our world today we have to teach our children not to trust. We have to teach them to be wary of strangers. It is often hard because children trust so. To such as these belongs the kingdom of God.

**Believing in the impossible:** Nothing is impossible for a child. Pigs can talk and elephants can fly. Isn't that what Wilbur and Dumbo taught us? Their imaginations can conquer the world. There are no impossibilities or limits in the mind of a child. You can grow up and marry a prince or become president. It is only when we are told that we can't that the limitations become real. Does not the Scripture say, “With God nothing is impossible” (Luke 1:37). To such as these belongs the kingdom of God.

**Awe:** Children still have moments of awe. Everything is new. Have you ever been in a hurry walking with a young child? They have to stop and examine everything. Each day is a new learning experience. There is awe in everything and everyone around them. There is no hurry in them. Time is an unknown concept and thus there is plenty of time for awe. Why hurry when there is so much to see and do and to watch a snail move across a patio is an adventure! To such as these belongs the kingdom of God.

**Learning:** Children are eager to learn. Now this may not be evident when we are pushing them to finish their homework before bed time or before going out to play. But children are eager to learn. Each experience brings new feelings, new ideas, new possibilities. They see the world as an ever expanding classroom. They are not afraid to touch things, taste things, etc. They want to know why and how things work. Each moment opens up new possibilities. To such as these belongs the kingdom of God.

Then we grow up! We lose the sense of wonder and awe. We no longer trust. We no longer accept people who are different than we are. We find reasons why we cannot do things. Our experiences discourage us. Fear and failure have been introduced to our lives. All of these impact how we see the world around us and we know our limitations. We lose the possibility of the impossible. We know how things work.

Once we have discovered our limits we impose them on others. I can't do and therefore you can't do it either. We no longer believe. We no longer have a sense of awe in our lives. You see one sunset you have seen them all. We grow too busy to stop and see the wonder of the world around us. We know better than that. Don't you see, don't you understand – we don't have the resources, etc. We just can't do it.

Jesus says that children are to be our examples!

Reminding us of the awe, wonder, faith, trust and hope that are a part  
of who we are.

Reminding us that each day brings new discoveries, new mercies.

Reminding us that this is a world filled with awe and hope.

Reminding us that to such as these belongs the kingdom of God:

Those who still believe in impossible possibilities.