

Children of God, United
Mark 10:13-16
October 7, 2018 – World Communion Sunday

Jesus blesses the little children. . . What a great story! It's one of the stories that clergy often cite when asked about infant baptism. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." It's one of the stories I sometimes cite when I'm asked if it's appropriate for little children to take communion. I would no more keep children for the communion table than I would keep them from the family supper table. No, they may not know all the theological details surrounding the sacrament; a lot of adults don't know all the theological details surrounding the sacrament. But, like adults, children know that this is a very special meal; and it's a special meal because Jesus loves little children – all children.

I truly pray for the children in our church. I pray that they remember at least a bit of what they are learning in Sunday School; and I pray that a little of what I hope they hear during our children's moment stays with them. I know very well that they won't remember all ten commandments; or the entire Apostle's Creed. But I pray that they will never, never forget how much God loves them. We all know the song: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Today's lesson ends with the statement: "he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them." The Common English Bible simply translates this: "He hugged the children and blessed them." I like that. He hugged the children, and blessed them. What a gift God has given to the children of the world. I like to picture God in Christ giving the children of the world one great big group hug. I love the imagery.

But, as I say that, I recognize that this is not only, and maybe even not primarily, a lesson about children. What does Jesus say to his disciples? "I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." He's not talking about infants and toddlers here. He's talking about you and about me. He's calling us to come to God with this simplicity, with the innocence, with the humility of a child. Indeed, we are all children of God. That doesn't just mean that we are all members of God's family, or even just that we are all descendants from the same created order. No, that means that we are called to bring a certain simplicity and love and respect to our relationship as a child might bring to a parent. (Now, I'm speaking of a young child here – I'm not talking about the teenagers who always know better than mom or dad. I'm sure none of us would outwardly make that claim in our relationship with God; but sometimes we do act a bit more like wayward teenagers than little children.)

Friends, today is World Communion Sunday. It's one of those church holidays that I really love. I've stated before how much I love the Sacrament of Communion. I've commented before about that most special verse in the prayer: "Make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world." But this is World Communion Sunday. Some denominations celebrate

communion every Sunday. Some churches, like ours, celebrate communion once a month and on special occasions; and some only celebrate communion a few times a year. But today... Today, Christian churches around the globe are celebrating this most special meal. So today, when we pray “one with each other,” we are indeed uniting with people from all races, all ages, all cultures, all languages; and “all” means “all.”

And what does our lesson say? We don’t need to get “all complicated.” Yes, I can explain in great detail all the various theological views held by various denominations about what actually happens to the elements of communion during the consecration. I can explain how those views evolved, and how at times they have actually split the church. But I’m not going there today, for today, I simply suggest that we approach the table as a little child – with simplicity and with love.

I’m reminded of a man who was blessed to visit Hell. When he arrived, he entered a large banquet room. That table was spread with the most wonderful feast that anyone could imagine. But the people seated around the table were all suffering the worst hunger pangs imaginable, because that all had splints on their elbows. They could not bend their arms to get the food to their mouths. Then the man was taken to heaven. He was shown the same type of room with the same fantastic feast. And the people had the same splints on their elbow, but they were all wonderfully satisfied, because they were feeding each other.

As we approach the table, let us realize that this is truly a table that stretches around the world, that stretches from pole to pole. There is nowhere that this table does not reach; and there is no one who is not welcome to take a place at this table. This is a table where Christ feeds each of us; and from this table, we are invited to go forth to feed each other, to feed all others, to feed the world.

Hear those words again: “Lord, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.” Let us come to the table as a little child. And let us leave, knowing that we are, together with all the world, children of God’s universal family.

Let us pray. . .

Lord,

You are our creator, and our heavenly father.

And so, we come together to be feed, to feed others,
indeed to feed all the world.

May we come to your table in simplicity, in humility,
and most of all in love.

And may we go forth from your table to share your love,
with all we meet in all we say and do. Amen.

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