

Sept 26, 2021 DCLC Sunday
Mark 10:13-16
Following Jesus into Child-Like Faith

Mark 10:13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”* ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Our theme at St. Matthew and DCLC this year is “Follow.” Follow Jesus. We follow Jesus in faith, hope and love. Faith. Hope. Love. Love is what we are known by. This was Jesus’ command to His disciples:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

Our doctrine is important. It’s vital. But it is not what we are known by. Morality is important. But it is not what we are known by. Worship is important. But it is not what we are known by. We are known by love.

And as love is what we are known by, faith is what we live by. Paul would quote one of the Old Testament prophets and say, *“the righteous will live by faith”* (Romans 1:17) and writing to the Corinthians, he said *“We live by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7). We don’t live by our knowledge or our abilities or our experience. We live by faith. We are called to do things we can’t do by our own experience or strength or knowledge—things that will fail unless God does them. We live by faith.

We are known by love. We live by faith. And Hope is our voice. Peter says this is what happens when you set apart Jesus as Lord:

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

We are a voice of hope. And our world needs that.

Be known by love. Live by faith. Be a voice of hope. That's who we are as followers of Jesus. And there is no clearer picture of that than the last 20 years of David's Christian Learning Center.

DCLC is here because of people **Living by Faith**. One of the guys who helped get DCLC started, Ray Z., is in a Men's Bible Study I lead on Tuesday mornings. I asked him a few weeks ago what he knew about preschools and daycares when this all started. He said, "Absolutely nothing." And yet that lack of knowledge didn't stop God from bringing about blessing. We didn't know a lot, so we made some mistakes. So those mistakes didn't stop God either. That's what living by faith is.

And for 20 years, we have been doing our best to **be known by love** and showing that love to the children God sends us and teaching them to show that love to others. And we have received that love back from the children.

And for 20 years, we have had countless opportunities to be that **voice of hope** to the children of DCLC and their families. And they have been that voice of hope to us.

Anytime you are in a position to teach children, you always learn something from the children. Jesus knew this. He elevated the position of children. One day, people were bringing little children to Jesus to be blessed. The disciples felt like Jesus needed to be spending His time with the adults (the important people) and not the children and they tried to send the children away.

From a first century Middle Eastern mindset, this is understandable. In his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Professor Eugene Boring writes, "In the first-century Mediterranean world, the characteristic feature of children was not thought to be their innocence, but their lack of status and legal rights."

This was the mindset of the disciples. So Jesus had to rebuke them. Mark writes:

***14** When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **15** Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive*

the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

We are supposed to learn something from children. “Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” So what do we learn from children?

Children know how to receive gifts. They do. They receive gifts the way they are meant to be received—freely. Question for the adults: If I showed up at your house, say around Christmas time and had gifts for you, and you didn’t have anything for me, how would you feel? No doubt you would be embarrassed. That’s the way adults treat gifts. If someone gives you something, you are supposed to give them something back. I have news for you. That’s not a gift. That’s a trade. If I showed up at your house with a gift for your children and they didn’t have one to give me, I guarantee you they would not be embarrassed in the least. They would take their gift and enjoy it. That’s what you do with gifts.

When God offers us the free gift of forgiveness and salvation, it’s a gift, not a trade. He doesn’t want to be paid back. There is nothing we can do to pay Him back. When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, we were given the free gift of forgiveness, the free gift of salvation, the free gift of heaven. We can’t pay God back for that. It’s a gift, not a trade. God just wants us to receive it and enjoy it, like little children.

And children know how to trust. They just do. Sometimes to a fault. When my brother-in-law was about 7 and his sister Elyse was about three, he told her that one of the nice things about being so little was that she could walk under the table without hitting her head. Here is the bad part. He knew she was just tall enough that she *would* hit her head if she tried walking under the table. He thought it would be funny to see her do it. But she trusted her big brother and proceeded to walk under the table. As Darin had hoped, she hit her head. The story gets worse. At this point, the loving and kind big brother said, “You almost made it! If you try again, I think you can do it.” So...you guessed it... she tried again—with the same result—wham! Right in the head.

I do have a point to this other than embarrassing my brother-in-law. The point is that little children receive things trustingly. When Jesus says

“receive the kingdom of God like a little child,” one of the ways we receive it is trustingly. Now, don’t get me wrong. God has given us brains, reason and logic for a purpose—but the purpose is not to figure out if what He says is true or not. God’s Words and God’s promises to us are good and true and faithful. When He says it, we are to believe it. When He commands it, we are to do it. When He opens the door, we are to walk through. What God gives us is good. What God calls us to do is right. What God expects of us is trust. We are to receive Him and His kingdom trustingly—like a little child.

Will we bump our heads from time to time? Sure we will! But we have a loving Father (not a mean big brother), who will pick us up, comfort us, heal us and set us on His path again.

One more thing to learn from children: **Children know how to show joy.** You’ve seen this. When a child receives a great gift, the child gets excited. They run, they yell. They tell everyone about it. At DCLC I get hear children tell me excitedly about new shoes, or a new backpack or a new toy or a new baby sister. Sometimes a child gets so excited they forget to say thank you. That’s ok. You see the thank you in their joyful response. It is unbridled joy. Adults can’t do that. They get bridled. We are too mature, too self-conscious, too sophisticated to do that. So Jesus doesn’t say, “Receive the kingdom of God like a full-grown, mature, sophisticated adult.” He says receive it like a little child. Get excited about this free gift you have been given, like a little child.

So praise God for 20 years of living by faith, being known by love and being a voice of hope at David’s Christian Learning Center. Praise God for all that He has done for the children and families and staff of DCLC. Praise God for all that He is teaching us about the Kingdom of God through little children. Let’s watch them and learn about the kingdom of God. And as we follow Jesus this year at St. Matthew and DCLC, we seek to be known by love, and live by faith and be a voice of hope. And we do it all like little children. Amen.