

September 20, 2015
Sermon The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Mark 9:30–37

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Mark 9:30–37 (ESV)

³⁰ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, ³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” ³² But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. ³³ And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶ And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Picture this. You are at work and your boss tells you that your project, whatever it is, has to be redone, even though you did it right the first time, he tells you to scrap what you are doing and do it again.

Do you rant and rave, throw your tools across the room, pitching a big fit, sticking your tongue out, and sit down and cry in a corner? Or do you start over again?

How about when you are in High School or College? You have a big test coming up and the day of the test to tell the professor or teacher no, I don't wanna!

We know how foolish it is when we see ourselves and others acting childishly. As ridiculous as my examples were, we do do foolish and childish things.

Nevertheless, sometimes we can and should act like children. One example is our Gospel for this morning. Jesus teaches us that there's a right way to act like little children.

Jesus sees the disciples act like little children. Arguing about who was the best. A game of one-upmanship. Mom likes me better. Or Jesus likes me best! He's your friend, but He's my BEST friend.

Jesus' plan was to spend time alone with His disciples so that they would know what was about to take place.

Yet the disciples didn't get it, and they were afraid to ask. Even so, Jesus did not cast them away. By grace they would one day understand. And God doesn't cast you away either when you are slow to learn. He is patient with you too!

And...they missed it and went on with their childish ways. Jesus couldn't have been clearer. He describes to them His atoning death on the cross and His resurrection that would bring them—and you—the free gift of everlasting life.

The disciples so missed the point that they argued about who among them was the greatest. Some may have suggested that the money-handler was the most trusted. Why else would Jesus have placed His trust in Judas?

Peter may have claimed that he had the greatest faith, yet he was the one to rebuke Jesus and to deny Him three times.

Then Jesus asks them what they were arguing about on the road. They were remarkably quiet when confronted with their own pride.

Jesus tells them, if anybody wants to be first, he must be last and the servant of all. That's certainly not what the disciples were thinking.

Jesus demonstrates this in Himself. He who was begotten of the Father came into this world as a Suffering Servant to win salvation for you by His righteous death and resurrection.

Often we fall into the trap of acting like spoiled children. Many believe that the more status, the higher up on the social ladder or the more toys that they have, the happier and better life will be.

Some feel the need to get ahead of everyone else, even stepping on their heads and belittling them in actions and words just so we can feel a little bit better about ourselves.

As with the disciples, many times we push to prove who is the greatest, yet that's the wrong place to start, playing the holier than thou game.

Jesus is clear about what is important, as He tells in today's text.

Let me give you a quick example of the faith of a child.

One day a mother was going through her six-year-old daughter's school backpack and became worried when she saw one of the papers.

On it were all the desks for the students in her daughter's classroom. Each place was marked with a circle or an X. Quickly she asked her daughter what it meant. The child replied, "Those are the children in my class. Those who go to church I marked with a cross, and those who don't I circled."

Relieved but curious, the mother asked why she did that. She answered, "It's so I can tell those who don't know about Jesus." Still curious, the mother asked how her daughter knew that.

The daughter replied, "I asked them."

That straightforward attitude makes children endearing and points out how as we grow up we may lose some of the straightforwardness of our faith in Christ.

We'd never just straight out ask someone that question...but with a childlike faith, there is no such restriction on us such as pride or embarrassment.

In our spiritual life, God enables us to act like little children—most appropriately. Why should we hold back?

Jesus presents to the disciples a little child.

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” (v 37).

This is the straightforward answer that the child might give: “God is with me.”

It is simply an expression of our love for God in welcoming a little child in faith.

Jesus describes what it is like to have faith like a little child.

The faith of a little child recognizes its total dependence on God and trusts him completely.

The faith of a little child recognizes its poverty and accepts God’s grace as a gift.

In our weakness, just like that of a little child, God’s power is made perfect. God doesn’t need our pride. He doesn’t need our cockiness. God wants our love.

The Lord says to each of you to have a faith like a little one. A child has no pride, only a simple love for God. A child accepts God as His Father...He accepts Jesus as His Savior, just because it’s true.

By the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit has given you that same faith.

A faith that trusts completely because that is just the way it is.

A faith that doesn’t feel embarrassed.

A faith that doesn’t become meek merely because people ask about it.

A faith that is uncompromising in the face of the world because the child knows the truth about Jesus Christ.

It is this simple but strong and sound faith that our Lord wants all Christians to keep and maintain.

We adults know how difficult that is and how often we have failed. But our weakness is precisely where our Lord works on us.

It is there that His power is made perfect in you. It is in our spiritual weakness that we rely on God and trust Him to carry us through ... just like a little child.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus! Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria