



The Pastor's Ponderings

I've been thinking about all of us, and how dependent we are on each other. And how hard it has been to be apart as much as we have had to be.

Tomorrow night the Safe Re-entry team will be meeting to design what our world will be like when we finally get to GO to church again.

Of course, church and Christianity consists of far more than just getting together in our Sunday best, singing and praying, eating donuts, and enjoying each other.

And it is sure more than a church building.

We are the church, wherever we are, even when we are meeting on Zoom or worshiping via Facebook.

Still, in spite of enjoying our recent online life, I'd sure love to see you all face to face.

Speaking of faces! I saw the cutest little baby at the grocery store the other day. Reaching out to me and babbling- just content to be who she was and where she was.

In our culture little children are deeply valued, cuddled and coddled and carefully swaddled and fed, and put into cozy beds in designer bedrooms at night. In fact, they really come first among our priorities; or so we claim, in spite of the number of children suffering abuse and poverty.

Anyway, did you know that back in the time of Jesus, a little child was of the very lowest priority, utterly without status? They had no rights of any kind, and were completely dependent on the good will of other people to care for them. *"Thomas Aquinas taught that in a raging fire a husband was obliged to save his father first, then his mother, next his wife, and last of all his young children"* (The Cultural World of Jesus, Sunday by Sunday, Cycle B).

So, in a society that didn't value wee ones at all - there came Jesus taking the very least valued member of society and making it every Christians brand new goal to lift them up: *"Whoever humbles themselves like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:4).

So giving up all claims to power and status and recognizing our complete dependence on God, **that** counts as greatness in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus takes it even further, saying, *"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me"* (Matthew 18:5). Jesus identifies himself with that same humble little child, the one with no power or status.

It's not the first time in Matthew's Gospel, that Jesus identifies with those who are powerless, needy, and marginal, And it won't be the last time that says that our response to the least is, in effect, our response to him (10:40-42; 25:34-46).

Jesus is so good at using hyperbole to make a dramatic point. Not only is it necessary to **become** a "little one" to enter the kingdom of heaven, but there is a dire warning for any who would lead "little ones" astray.

(continued on page 2)



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(continued from page 1)

Sadly, we can see countless examples of the damage done by church leaders and politicians to the “little ones” in the community by their abuse of power. Jesus states plainly, that those in power who have caused the downfall of others **will be held accountable**.

Whatever might cause one’s own fall, or the stumbling of others in the community – even if it is as important as a hand or foot or eye – it must be thrown far away, preferable into a stinky trash heap.

So where do we go with this teaching – at least for today?

If we listen to Jesus’ teaching – and we humble ourselves and become like the a little child – then we are becoming the “least of these” – and like the children of Jesus time and place, we cannot survive without the tender care of those around us.

To make this image work we must all be both the little ones ***and*** the ones on whom the little ones depend. It seems that this teaching would make us both Vulnerable ***and*** Dependent, ***and*** - at the same time, Caring, Giving, and loving. It makes us Interdependent and reliant upon each other; each one trusting on the care of the others; each one worthy of trust.

If we could treat each other as if our lives depended on each other what might that be like?

Maybe we need to

*Reach out and touch somebody's hand,
Make this world a better place if you can.*

Let us lift up the lowest among us and turn our attention away from the haughty.

I love you, little children in Christ. May you be lifted up and loved always.

Your, *Pastor E*

John & Deborah Browne, Luther Hunt, Mark Faith, Bill Cox, Joe Robb Blattner, Debbie McCormick, Susan Spooler, Carol Gleason, Liz Meyer, Debbie Bradley, Dawn Knoderer, Kim Farrar Frank, George & Helen Amick, Iris Likens, Pat Murray & Wally Allstun, Ed Sheridan & Nita Brackin, Pauline Filla, Martha D., Mary Hendrix, Ken Bohnsack, Wayne Piker, Kim Wells Schott, frontline workers, Felicia Fox, Henry S., Carol Poynor, relatives & friends serving in the military, all who are hurting, lonely, and afraid.



Do you have someone to add to our prayer list? Please inform the church office or fill out a form found at the back of the sanctuary.

*The intent for this
Sunday's Medita-
tion/Centering
Prayer group is
Enlightenment.*

*My mouth shall
speak wisdom:
the meditation
of my heart
shall be
understanding.
PSALM
49:3*

