



**Sermons from St. Marks  
United Church of Christ  
New Albany, Indiana**



**Children Should Be Seen...**

**Text: Mark 9:30-37**

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Mother's Day is always such an interesting day. It's a day of honoring Moms. On our church calendar it is entitled The Festival of the Christian Home and this a day when we reflect on our lives at home. It's also a day when we reflect on children and how we deal with children.

When I was growing up my parents often used a terrible line. "Children should be seen and not heard." It was something they heard growing up and repeated it. I don't know if it worked for their parents but it didn't work for us. They had to listen to me a lot.

But it does bring to mind how we view children.

Mark places us in an unusual situation this morning. The text is about too many things all happening at once.

Jesus tells them that he is going to be betrayed, will die for them, and will rise from the dead. The disciples do not listen to him. They are too engrossed in their own argument, namely, which one of us is the most important disciple of all.

Jesus is revealing who and what he is and they are acting like a bunch of children playing king of the hill.

And unlike the disciples in relationship to him; Jesus does hear the disciples and responds to them. He teaches them that their argument is silly and that they need to develop a servant attitude and accept the least in the kingdom of God. Mark says it well:

He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." {36} Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, {37} "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

Jesus is teaching them a lesson. To truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ they need to accept the least important people in the world. And so Jesus picks up a child...

Jesus, for a moment, tells us something very important about the people of his day---children were the least important people around. When pointing to the lowly of his day and age, Jesus pointed out that the children were the lowly of the lowly.

We like to think that we do not view children as the lowly of the lowly, but I'm not sure it is much different in 2007.

Children still seem to be at the bottom wrung of society. The reason for this is that children remain essentially powerless and without rights. Children have never been able to overthrow kings and children have never been able to vote. Children have never been able to exhibit status and power and have often be ignored, abused, and neglected by many societies. Children are usually always the ones at the bottom wrung of any culture. Is life much better for children now than it was at the time of Jesus.

About ten years ago the Children's Defense Fund did an analysis about the state of children in our country and the news was not good. They had some chilling statistics:

Every 9 seconds	a child drops out of school
Every 10 seconds	a child is reported abused or neglected
Every 14 seconds	a child is arrested
Every 25 seconds	a child is born to an unmarried mother
Every 32 seconds	a baby is born into poverty
Every 34 seconds	a baby is born to a mother who did not graduate from high school
Every 1 minute	a baby is born to a teen mother
Every 2 minutes	a baby is born at a low birth rate
Every 3 minutes	a baby is born to a mother who received late or no pre-natal care
Every 4 minutes	a child is arrested for an alcohol-related offense
Every 4 minutes	a child is arrested for a violent offense
Every 4 minutes	a child is arrested for a drug offense
Every 15 minutes	a baby dies
Every 2 hours	a child is killed by firearms
Every 4 hours	a child commits suicide
Every 7 hours	a child dies from neglect or abuse

The plight of children is very real even today. In a decade things have not improved. Jesus is reminding us that whenever we reach out to children, we are reaching out to society's lowliest people---people especially beloved by God.

Jesus also has us reach out to children because children are incredibly open to God. For children, God still remains wondrous.

One of the differences between children and adults is that children reach out to the world in wonder--adults often reach out to the world with cynicism and doubt. Children have the ability to make us reflect upon our heritage.

A young boy came home from Sunday School one day and his mother asked him what he had learned. The little boy told his mother that they had learned about how Moses had led the people to freedom from Egypt. When the mother asked her son how this took place, the little boy said:

"Well, Israeli commandoes attacked one night and killed the first born children. Then they fled the country, after eating a quick meal. When they came to the Red Sea Moses had the Sea Bees put up pontoon bridges. As the Egyptian army came closer, the Israeli troops held them off for a while--until everyone got across the river. Then, when the Egyptians were going over the bridge, the Israeli Navy Seals blew up the bridge, destroying the Egyptian Army."

The boy's mother stood there with her mouth agape and said, "That story is not believable--I can't believe your teacher taught you that!"

The boy said, "Well, if you think that story is unbelievable, you should have heard the one the teacher tried to pawn off on us."

Children also take words from the Bible seriously and they give us different understandings of things we have learned. I remember teaching a Sunday School class once and the lesson was the portion of Scripture where Jesus says, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." I asked the children what they thought it meant.

One little girl said, "When my brother and I eat eggs, he doesn't like the yolk, so I eat his yoke and it goes down real easy."

Jesus reminds us about something with children. Children approach God in different ways than adults. Children have a very simple, very direct approach to God. And it is refreshing. This reminds us that we have a special responsibility towards children. It's a role we have as mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, friends, and people within our own faith family.

Mother's Day is often so special because Moms always seem to have some insights and directions that others often don't have.

Ever think of some things you'd hardly ever hear a mother say?

1. "How on earth can you see the TV sitting so far back?"
2. "Yeah, I used to skip school a lot, too."
3. "Just leave all the lights on . . . it makes the house look more cheery."
4. "Let me smell that shirt -- Yeah, it's good for another week."
5. "Go ahead and keep that stray dog, honey. I'll be glad to feed and walk him every day."
6. "Well, if Timmy's mom says it's OK, that's good enough for me."

7. "The curfew is just a general time to shoot for. It's not like I'm running a prison around here."
8. "I don't have a tissue with me . . . just use your sleeve."
9. "Don't bother wearing a jacket -- the wind-chill is bound to improve."
10. "Don't be concerned about running with scissors. It's good exercise and stitches don't hurt that much."

We provide guidance for children because they need guidance. But they need more than guidance. From those of us who are adults they need to be loved from the core of our beings.

The author and psychiatrist the late M. Scott Peck who wrote the landmark book *The Road Less Traveled* said that years ago he read the book *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. He was taken by the book because the book described utopia as a place where people worked very hard, paid their own way, and there was no sort of benevolence. Everyone took care of themselves. Everyone was responsible for himself or herself and everyone took their own responsibility to take care of themselves. It was a perfectly logical, self-sufficient society. It was a piece of utopia.

Peck decided this was perfect---and then he thought about it a bit and realized there was a huge flaw in the book. The book had no children in it.

Children are totally dependent people. They do not earn their own way; they depend totally on the love and caring of others for them to grow up.

In recognizing their need children remind us about something else. The journey with Jesus is not so much based upon laws or rules or even doctrines. It is based upon a relationship.

When we have children in our midst we are called not to merely feed them or clothe them or give them facts they will need for life. We are called to have a relationship with them.

And it is not an equal relationship. They take more than they have the ability to give back.

So the next time you look into the eyes of a child, think not of the child as a small adult; think not of the child as a burden, but think instead of the child as a way you have the ability to share your love for God.