

CHILDREN AT WORD OF HOPE

Luke 9 “Who Will Be the Greatest”

⁴⁶An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. ⁴⁷Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. ⁴⁸Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all--he is the greatest.”



Luke 18 “The Little Children and Jesus”

¹⁵People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

It’s absolutely undeniable. Children are obviously very important to Jesus.

“Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes **ME???**” Now that’s important. And no less than: “...anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child **will never enter it!!!**” That’s pretty clear language as far as we’re concerned.

And it’s really rather amazing when you think about it. After all, in the society of Jesus’ time, children—like women—were seen as second class citizens, even second class in the sight of God if the religious authorities were to be believed.

But Jesus seems to look at people differently. Jesus doesn’t notice divisions of gender, he sees with love through the eyes of the Father. And so to the dismay of some, women are among his inner circle and even become the first witnesses of the resurrection. And where others see “miniature adults” who are out of control, self centered, impulsive, bothersome and even cruel (ever hear that old adage about the cruelty of children?), Jesus sees those beloved of the Father who know their need of God and who have a willingness to trust. It is precisely these, Jesus says, who will lead us into the kingdom. And that makes us wonder.

We wonder if children won’t benefit more from the time with Jesus in the company of the faithful than sequestered in a nursery. (Remember **HIS** promise: “where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there I am** in the midst of them?”) We wonder if “sharing the love of Jesus with **ALL** others and growing disciples” might lead us to demonstrate in our weekly gatherings a special love to these whom Jesus loved? We wonder if it’s appropriate to exclude children from our worship because they occasionally cause a commotion. We wonder if maybe even when there is an occasional outburst if it isn’t better for the rest of us to learn how to comfort and patiently bear with these “the least of these our brothers and sisters?”

It’s out of this wonderment in the presence of Jesus and his word that we propose the following:

We at Word of Hope Lutheran Church believe that children should be encouraged to attend and participate in our worship services. We will provide a place of comfort for the times when children are restless and need a break from worship but our greater goal is to support each family with small children so that the whole people of God can worship together. For of such is the Kingdom of God.

(So don’t be surprised if, from time to time, you see someone reach over to help a parent hold and comfort a child who’s upset. It’s our chance to welcome and embrace the ones Jesus went out of his way to cuddle.)