

Lutheran Church of the Master  
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188  
Curt Gerald, Interim Pastor  
October 3/4, 2009  
13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
"God's Work. Our Hands."

Have you received the email that my wife sent to me last week. The Subject lines says simply: "Kids Are Quick"

TEACHER: Maria, go to the map and find North America.

MARIA: Here it is.

TEACHER: Correct. Now class, who discovered America?

CLASS: Maria.

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TEACHER: John, why are you doing your math multiplication on the floor?

JOHN: You told me to do it without using tables.

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TEACHER: Glenn, how do you spell 'crocodile?'

GLENN: K-R-O-K-O-D- I-A-L'

TEACHER: No, that's wrong

GLENN: Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

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TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?

DONALD: H I J K L M N O.

TEACHER: What are you talking about?

DONALD: Yesterday you said it's H to O.

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TEACHER: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago.

WINNIE: Me!

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TEACHER: Glen, why do you always get so dirty?

GLEN: Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground than you are.

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TEACHER: Millie, give me a sentence starting with ' I. '

MILLIE: I is..

TEACHER: No, Millie..... Always say, 'I am.'

MILLIE: All right... 'I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.'  
TEACHER: George Washington not only chopped down his father's cherry tree, but also admitted it. Now, Louie, do you know why his father didn't punish him?  
LOUIS: Because George still had the axe in his hand.

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TEACHER: Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?  
SIMON: No sir, I don't have to, my Mom is a good cook.

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TEACHER: Clyde, your composition on 'My Dog' is exactly the same as your brother's. Did you copy his?  
CLYDE : No, sir. It's the same dog.

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TEACHER: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?  
HAROLD: A teacher

I suspect that children have always been like that ... and I suppose Jesus knew that ... which is probably why in today's Gospel reading from Mark 10:13-16, we read that *"The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: "Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God's kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you'll never get in." Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them."* (The Message)

I can just see in my mind's eye ... Jesus wrapping his arms around those kids ... fluffing the rich dark black hair on that one little guy ... looking into the beaming eyes of those three little girls ... probably down on his knees and making what looks like a football teams huddle and Jesus is the quarter back and ... it almost looks like they're telling secrets to each other and making sure no one else is listening.

And Jesus stands up and looks at his disciples and says ... "that is what this is all about." The simplicity of a child. Every now and then, leave your adult habits behind ... your ability to challenge every word ... your desire to be right which means everyone else has to be wrong ... your goals and ambitions ... your failures and your hurts ... just turn off those switches ... and be like the Glen who responded to the teacher's question " why do you always get so dirty?" with that wonderful simplistic "Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground than you are." After all ... it is simple ... but it is simply true, isn't it?

See, this is the Gospel reading for today ... the Good News ... and if we are listening to the Gospel reading today and to the Good News ... what we are hearing is the

importance of “keeping it simple” ... just like children can so easily do ... until we teach them and make their lives more difficult.

Let’s see if I have two pencils here and two pencils there ... I can simply count that on my fingers ... and I have ONE ... TWO ... THREE ... FOUR more. But pretty soon we are taught that we can’t use our fingers and our toes ... we have to use only our minds ... and we use flash cards or computer programs to learn multiplication and division tables ... and we learn to differentiate between yellow pencils and purple pencils ... and right answers and wrong answers ... and passing and failing ... and before we’re out of preschool our parents are starting to worry about how to save enough money so we can attend a vocational school or a college or a university and get our degree and earn a living so we can retire in 50 years and afford a nice nursing home.

It gets so complicated so quickly ... it wasn’t as long a journey as Jesus sat on the ground with the children that day ... in the Bronze Age we’re told it was @ 18 years ... so in Jesus’ day, it had grown all the way to be @ 20-30 years ... and now it has doubled to an average of @65 ... and when I was working at Friendship Village, we started talking about people in the next four or five generations living to between 125-150 years (each month’s Lutheran magazine includes birthday notices ... and in the current issue it lists 19 Lutherans celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this month ... 4 celebrating their 102<sup>nd</sup> ... and 1 each celebrating 103, 104, and 106 ... I believe the second was called “90 plus” a couple years ago ... now it is “100 plus” and 90 year old birthday’s aren’t included any longer.

I assume a 6 year old then was probably like a 6 year old ... except they only could anticipate 24 more years of life ... whereas we hope each of our Sunday School students today will live for at least 60 more years ... if not 100 or more.

So Jesus, who at that time was already “older than dirt” by that generation’s standards (because he was over 30), is probably down on the ground playing with the kids and hugging them (which I can’t do ... not because of arthritis ... but because of laws that say that old men ... particularly pastors and priests and rabbis ... aren’t suppose to touch children at the risk of being accused of children abuse because pedophiles have transgressed that trust) ... and Jesus is telling his disciples to “follow me.”

So today we thank God for the youth in today’s Church. As we said at the Churchwide Assembly, these youth aren’t the church of tomorrow ... they are the Church today. They welcomed to you to worship ... they ushered ... they are the choir ... they are the joy of our lives ... they are our hope for the future ... they are your sons and your daughters ... they are your grandchildren and great-grandchildren ... and we thank every Sunday School teacher and mentor and shepherd and guide and musician and 212 youth in Bible School and Sunday School ...

You know, I have shared with you what the church means in the word Sacrament. As Lutherans, we understand Sacrament to mean something “(1) instituted by Christ with

(2) an earthly element.” In the tradition of the church of a thousand years ago which counted over 50 sacraments, we could almost count each classroom as a Sacrament because Jesus said “bring the little children to me. Don’t get between them and me.” This certainly has the command of Jesus ... it only lacks a specific identifiable earthly element like water, bread, or wine ... it is hard to find an adequate thing to symbolize for life or hope or future ...

Maybe this is why in 1 John 2:28-3:2 (New International Version), the author refers to all of us, including us older ones, as “**Children of God?**” Remember how he says it?

**2:**<sup>28</sup>And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

<sup>29</sup>If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

**3:** <sup>1</sup>How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup>Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears,<sup>[a]</sup> we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

A child knows her daddy ... a child know his Mom ... they might now know what the thunder outside the window means ... or why they’re eating a lot of hotdogs and beans ... they may not understand why Dad is suddenly home all day ... or why Grandma is sleeping in that big box with the lid open ... but when the child know that Mom or Dad is there, everything is OK.

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| TEACHER: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago. |
| WINNIE: Me!  |

Oh, Winnie ... or Michael ... or Sarah ... or Grace ... or John ... or whatever your name is ... we’re so glad we have you today ... and even more important, so is Jesus.

Jesus shows us what God’s work is when he held those little children in his arms. That is still God’s work. But in order for it to happen today, it needs our hands.

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| (10:00 – Invite the preschool teachers to come forward for a blessing ... and congregants to come forward and lay their hands on the heads of the teachers.) |
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