

LITTLE CHILDREN (LK 24:36-53, 1 JN 3:1-7)

Sermon by the Rev. Corinne Hodges, Sun., April 26, 2009, SJOC

- I. Unique relationship with my mom
 - A. Growing up friends surprised about how much we talked
 - B. Mom is more than a mom, she is a good friend, one of the best
 - C. Out together, people have asked if sisters, share jokes that no one else gets, intuition—can never hide things from her, she has a way of knowing
 - D. Times gets us into trouble—cross the line and move from friend to daughter or mother mode
 - E. “I will always be her ‘little girl’
 - F. I have seen this in my work with families and know it to be true—even when she is in her 80s and beyond, I will indeed always be her child

- II. Today’s readings remind us of human beings’ status of “little children” in relationship with God—prove the ways we behave like little children
 - A. Disbelief like the disciples
 - 1. Same as last week—Jesus appears and stands before them real
 - 2. Disciples a bit giddy, confused and disoriented, they think see a ghost and “in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering”
 - 3. Even worse than last week’s JN reading, not only does Jesus need to show scars, but adds another reason for them to believe: eating
 - 4. By eating, Jesus brings the understanding down to their level so they can see and believe—what could be more physical than consuming and digesting food
 - 5. Disciples, little children need to see and hear—“Look there is no magic here. I’m the real thing!”
 - 6. By doing this, Jesus opens their minds and ready to learn more
 - B. Acts mentioning the Israelites: claim of ignorance
 - 1. Ignorance in not knowing Christ was Messiah excuses them for following Jewish leaders and aiding in plot to take Jesus’ life
 - 2. Little children, like claiming “they did not know” frees them of guilt—ignorance is bliss. Can continue to act as they have and follow same leaders, who also did not know

- III. But disciples and Israelites are not the only ones who are God’s children and if we are honest, we too can admit that there are many times when we do things that prove we are still little children who have a ways to grow and mature in our relationship with God
 - A. In light of Resurrection, need to ask, “What are the things I need Jesus to save me from?”

1. Some of those things may be physical like earthly situations of loss and suffering
2. Others are ways in which we choose to behave or think like many children—choose to cling to our parent on our own terms rather than grow
3. Ways can be self-destructive, obsessive, unyielding, uncompromising, my way or no way, don't want new resurrected life
4. We cannot see, touch or be fed by Christ because our minds are not open to new understanding

IV. But we need not remain in this naïve, “claiming to be innocent” state

- A. 1 JN talks about a process of change and purification—scripture quote
 1. Start as children, we evolve, develop and are purified to become more like Christ
 2. Paul “Little imitators of Christ”—moving towards less and less sin, not being deceived by other people
 3. Rest of chapter 1 JN highlights 2 things that serve as test: how we live (acts of righteousness) and who we love (show of love for brother and sister)
 4. What we will be eventually has not yet been revealed, but we will be changed to be purer, more Christ-like
- B. In Gospel, we hear of the change of mind that has taken place in disciples after they see, can touch and watch Jesus eat—after they witness him and believe in his Resurrection, but what comes next in the reading is left out...
 1. Jesus commissions them—sends them out to do good acts, to show others how to live as Christ-like imitators
 2. Blesses them, gives them the holy strength they need to carry it out
 3. Like the disciples being commissioned and blessed to become more than little children, so are we.

V. Little children eventually must grow up and become adults.

- A. I recall when my own parents stood by and watched me leave the nest, go on to accomplish things they had only dreamed for me
- B. And I see this same thing happening in my nephews and in the children I have had the pleasure to know and experience around me
- C. God will always be our spiritual parent—we will always remain God's children
- D. But God calls us to become more—in light of the Resurrection, this means believing in the risen Christ and witnessing the new life not only in the distant future, but here and now

- E. Where and when have you experienced Christ's saving action in your life? When were you like a little child, watching in awe as new life broke forth right before your very eyes from a circumstance or in a person that you never thought possible?
- F. Where did hope become a reality?
- G. We too can become part of that hoped for, holy, here-on-earth reality. Through our acts and love we can become signs of resurrected life for others.
- H. Jesus asks, "Have you anything to eat?" Good ? What kind of food do we have to provide for people? What are the practical things we can do, the bread and wine we can share with the world?
- I. As we continue to move forward in this post-Easter reality, one that at times is confusing and disorienting, may we find ways to make our own contribution. As the world changes around us, let us not just stand in amazement watching ghosts like the disciples. Let's make the holy real and do something Christ-like in our daily work and life. Children of God, together, let us carry out the work of God's Kingdom.