

Noticing Children

Texts: Ephesians 6:1-9, Matthew 21:12-17
Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church – August 8, 2021
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Denis Waitley, in *Seeds of Greatness*, writes, “One of the reasons I love to be around children is because they make me laugh. And I guess that’s why I like certain people that interview children. The best is, no doubt, Art Linkletter. And Art Linkletter can get children to say, as he puts it, ‘the darndest things.’ He remembers a three-year-old girl with big, brown eyes whom he asked, ‘What do you do to help your mother?’ ‘I help my mom cook brefas,’ she replied. ‘Well, how do you help your mom with brefas?’ Art asked. She didn’t hesitate: ‘I put the toast in the toaster, but she won’t let me flush it!’

Art asked one grammar school youth what his father did for a living. The boy took the microphone as if it were an ice cream cone. ‘My dad’s a cop! He catches crooks and burglars and spread-eagles ‘em and puts cuffs on ‘em and takes ‘em down to the station and puts ‘em in the slammer.’ ‘Wow,’ Art replied, ‘I bet your mother gets worried about his work, doesn’t she?’ ‘Heck no!’ the youth assured Art. ‘He brings her lots of watches and rings and jewelry.’

I really like the one where he interviewed the kid and said, ‘Now let me give you a situation. You’re the pilot of a commercial airliner. And you’ve got 250 passengers. And you’re flying to Hawaii. You’re out over the ocean and all four engines go out. What would you do?’ The little kid stood there and thought and he said, ‘I would press the fasten-seat belt button and parachute!’” (From Charles R. Swindoll. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998. p. 76).

Quite frankly, that is what I love about children. They are curious. They truly say the darndests things. They have not been tainted by the world yet and still display an innocence about themselves. Precious in the sight of God for sure.

Picture the scene in the Gospel of Matthew from our text for this morning. Jesus has just been welcomed into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. There was a parade, Jesus was seated comfortable on the cloaks of His disciples on the back of the donkey. The people had lay down palm branches in the road and shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” It had been quite a reception, and many took notice of Jesus and His followers.

After Jesus entered Jerusalem, the text tells us that He entered the temples and cleaned house. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and drove them out. For the temple was a place of worship and praise, not a shopping mall. After that, Jesus began to heal the blind and the lame. As you might imagine, the religious leaders were not happy. Their livelihood, their way of doing things was all called into question. And to make matters worse, **THE CHILDREN!** They were continuing to yell and carry on and celebrate even further the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem. I am sure that the parade was like nothing they had ever seen before, and their excitement was too difficult to contain.

Their reaction shows us that children notice us. There is no doubt that the children saw the triumphal entry into Jerusalem of Jesus Christ. They participated, along with their parents and family, in the laying of branches and shouting. They were overcome with enthusiasm and excitement of the day. They could not help but burst with that thrill in the temple. If you have ever taken your children or seen children who have

just come back from a day at an amusement park or a day of fun with the family, it takes awhile to get them settled down. Perhaps you have reacted like the temple officials and said to yourself or to others, “Can we just quiet the children?”

However, the children noticed their parents’ excitement in welcoming Jesus, and they wanted to welcome Him too. Children see how we teach them. Children see how we react and respond to life’s situations. Children imitate and copy what they see in our behavior and in the behavior of those around them. That is why Paul’s message to the Ephesians was so important for his day and for ours still today. “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” They are to be brought up learning about the Lord, being able to ask the questions that will help their faith to be formed and grow.

And we, as adults, can learn from the children. “From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise.” Out of the mouths of babes... You have, no doubt, heard that phrase before. Out of the mouths of babes comes such a raw truth and observation. The children in that temple noticed Jesus for who He was. They may have not understood everything about Jesus or about His ministry, but that did not matter. They recognized Him as somebody they wanted to respond to by shouting and carrying on only as a child does. As adults, we can learn a great deal from them.

As adults, we should notice the children. Jesus said in Mark 10, ‘Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ What did Jesus mean by this? Is He saying that we should just all act like children for our entire adult lives (for some of you, you are already doing that, right? You claim with boldness that you are never going to grow up!)? What qualities do children possess that

we as adults should notice and follow their lead? There are so many. They have an innocence, a faith and wholehearted trust in people, a sense of absolute surrender, and humility. They have not been contaminated by the cruelty of this world yet, and so they engage in a way that is pure and right and true. But do we notice that?

Or do we notice more about the children the things that they do that we do not agree with? Do we notice the kids who just want to watch television and play video games? Do we notice only the teenagers whom we deem lazy and do not want to do their homework, who sleep until noon every chance they get? Do we just notice the bullies and the catty girls on the playground? Certainly, there are those out there who fit that negative image of children, but there are so many more that provide such a positive example of what Jesus speaks about in Scripture.

When was the last time that you stopped to notice a child? When was the last time you took the time to learn something from a child? When was the last time you approached life – even your walk with Jesus Christ – with the innocence, surrender, and humility of a child? Yes, indeed, we can learn a great deal from children that will help us grown in our relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. Take the time to notice the children. Let us pray...

Lord, help us to be like the children in our faith walk with You. Give us the innocence, the trust and faith, the surrender and the humility like a child so that we may more fully love and serve You. We thank You for our wonderful children whom we can learn so much from. Give us their eyes as we walk in faith with You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen