

**Little Ones to Him Belong  
3/26/2017**

**“Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”  
Incredible, deep truth there... but wait, there’s more.**

**I can draw great strength and comfort from knowing,  
not worrying about, whether “Jesus loves me.”  
I can KNOW,  
because of my life experience walking with Jesus, yes,  
and that is HUGE, but I can confirm that truth...  
because the Bible tells me so.**

**But that beautiful, simple little children’s song continues.**

**“Little ones to Him belong. They are weak, but he is strong.”  
(PLEASE NOTE- the sermon is NOT about this song.)**

**A few months ago,  
we looked at the passage about  
letting the little children come to Jesus.**

**We focus on THAT part,  
but there is another part to that passage.**

**Mark 10:13-15**

**People were bringing little children to Jesus  
to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.**

**<sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them,  
“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,  
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”**

**<sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive  
the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”**

**“Little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong.”**

So in order to enter the kingdom,

1. How do we receive it like one of the little ones?
2. How do we recognize that WE are weak,  
so that we will rely on HIS strength, like a little child?

I think there is a story that Jesus tells  
that makes the point for us probably way too clearly.

I think this story is as relevant for us today  
as it was 2,000 years ago when Jesus first told it.

I don't think the problems have gone away,  
that they no longer characterize religious people  
who think they are seeking God.

**3 passages of Scripture today-** (We've already looked at one.)

**Luke 18:9-14**

To some who were confident of their own righteousness  
and looked down on everybody else,  
Jesus told this parable:

<sup>10</sup> “Two men went up to the temple to pray,  
one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

People went to the Temple... to worship God, right?

They went to pray, to give alms, make sacrifices,  
to conduct “God” business or work out  
their relationship responsibilities with God... true?

One would hope it was MORE than just fulfilling obligations,  
but actually coming to commune with and honor God.

I mean there were lots of other places  
where you could conduct business or "be seen to be seen."  
The Temple had a clear purpose,  
and it was to honor God and be a focal point  
about people's relationship with him.

Question- why do people go to "church" today?

Now we all know that church  
isn't the building but the people,  
but we still talk about going to "church,"  
like people went to the Temple,  
a place or group where people work out  
their relationship with God.

It's not about self, or what I want.

It's not about ME at all.

1. It's about God and glorifying Him.

2. It's all about what God wants.

3. It's about listening to Him

and being transformed by Him.

At least, that's the theory.

<sup>10</sup> "Two men went up to the temple to pray,  
one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

Now to "get" or understand the comparison,  
we need to understand how Jesus is setting this story up.

Who would represent the strongest contrast

1. between righteous and unrighteous,

2. between holy and unholy,

3. between good, churchgoing folk

and folks who "have no right to be there?"

On one side, you have the Pharisee-  
 the most “righteous of the righteous,”  
 who in the presence of 2-3 witnesses has  
 not only committed to keep the law of Moses,  
 but also the oral traditions around the law of Moses.

1. They fast twice a week, every Monday and Thursday,
2. They scrupulously abide by the Sabbath regulations,
3. They avoid women; they avoid Samaritans and gentiles,  
 lest they somehow contract “ritual uncleanness.”

And in the other corner, you have- the tax collector.

(Everyone is supposed to boo here-

It's like 1<sup>st</sup> first century melodrama.)

1. Tax collectors were Roman collaborators.
2. They overcharged.
3. They associated with the low life of their culture-  
 They HAD to, because no respectable Jew  
 would have anything to do with them.

So how did these two men PRAY,  
 since supposedly that is why both of them  
had come to the Temple when the story opened?

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself:  
 ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—  
 robbers, evildoers, adulterers—  
 or even like this tax collector.

<sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

(Now don't you think God already knows when He fasts,  
and how much he gives?)

But going to church, or the Temple was really not about God,  
 but about himself- how good he was,  
 especially compared to other people.

God was kind of peripheral to the whole process.  
 He came to talk to God about himself,  
 how good he was before God.

He was NOT one of the "little ones." He is a BIG one.

He "stood up to pray."

Now THAT won't call attention to himself at all, now will it?

But what about the other guy  
 who came to the Temple to pray?

<sup>13</sup> "But the tax collector stood at a distance.

He would not even look up to heaven,  
 but beat his breast and said,  
 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

<sup>14</sup> "I tell you that this man, rather than the other,  
 went home justified before God.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,  
 and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

One came to focus on himself,  
 The other came to communicate with God,  
 to recognize where he stood with God,  
 to be grateful to God for grace and mercy.

One was attuned to God, the other was focused on himself.

And this morning, some will come to listen to God,  
 and others will want what they want,  
 so that THEY can have a "meaningful worship experience."

They want to SEE, or HEAR or FEEL something.

But are they coming to encounter God, or their preferences?

We want worship as “performance art,”  
but historically, that has NOT been God’s agenda.

As we study through Scripture,  
we see that God has always spoken  
through broken, earthen vessels, cracked pots, as it were.

1. Moses- stuttered, or had a speech problem. (Ex. 3)
2. Isaiah knew he was a man with unclean lips, (Is. 6)  
from a people with unclean lips.
3. Peter was a coarse fisherman,  
capable of oaths and cursing,
4. James and John were known as the “sons of Thunder.”
5. Paul was a persecutor of the church,
6. Timothy had a courage problem.
7. John Mark abandoned Paul and Barnabas  
on the very first mission to the gentiles.

Why not go with the eloquent ones, those who could  
enrapture a crowd with their natural abilities?

Listen to Paul’s explanation of WHY God does that-

II Cor. 4:5-7

For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord,  
and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.  
<sup>6</sup> For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,”  
made his light shine in our hearts to give us  
the light of the knowledge of the glory of God  
in the face of Christ.

**<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in “jars of clay”  
to show that this all-surpassing power  
is from God and not from us.**

**The power is not in us, the eloquence is not in us,  
but in God, and in HIS message.  
God CHOOSES flawed vessels  
to keep the focus on Him, instead of us.**

**And people coming to the Temple to pray,  
or to “church” to worship,  
should not be coming out of what is in it for them,  
but to encounter God,  
to listen to HIM speak to them,  
and to glorify and worship HIM.**

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**Why do you come to church,  
for what you want or get out of it,  
or for what you bring to God through it?**

**Is it to be thankful for what God has done for you all week,  
The spiritual blessings, and physical blessings  
and family blessings and every other kind of blessings-**

**Are you thankful for mercy and grace,  
(“God have mercy on me, a sinner...”)  
and THAT is why you have come this morning,  
so you come with a heart already full of thankfulness,  
eager to overflow in song,  
and unite with other believers in prayer and remembering,  
and eager to listen to a message from the Lord?**

**And the ones who humble themselves as little children,  
who know they are the little ones who “to Him belong,”**

**“That THEY are weak, but HE is strong,”**

**According to Jesus,**

- 1. THEY are the ones who go home justified.**
- 2. They are the ones who may enter  
and experience the Kingdom of God.**

**God wants to MEET YOU HERE THIS MORNING.**

**He has a message that is uniquely for you.**

**This morning, are you listening for God to speak to you-**

- 1. Through the songs that we are singing?**
- 2. Through prayers that are offered?**
- 3. Through the Communion thoughts  
and Scriptures that are shared?**
- 4. Through the Scriptures of the sermon, even if  
the style or the sermon itself doesn't “move” you,  
are you open for God to speak to you through it?**

**The slides may indeed be out of sequence...**

**(anybody want to take a turn in the booth?)**

**God can still speak through the songs and the Scriptures.**

**The elders may be too quiet, or Bob too loud,**

**but if it's about you and God,**

**God will find a way to speak to you,**

**or Satan will find a way to distract you.**

**And you will go home justified... or not.**

