

Mt Carmel UMC

October 6, 2024

World Communion Sunday

“The Kid’s Table” – Mark 10.2-16 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

On this World Communion Sunday as I talk about children being invited to come to Jesus, I want to share this image of the Last Supper in a new light. The painting *A Table of Hope* by Joey Velasco shows the famous portrait of Jesus from DaVinci’s Last Supper sitting with portraits of actual street children from Manilla the artist met and helped with his foundation. [A Table of Hope: a modern-day depiction of the Last Supper - UCA News](#)

The gospel story this morning begins with a value judgment. This is nothing new, throughout the gospels we find people judging tax collectors like Zacchaeus as sinners. But in the gospels, Jesus welcomed them into his company and community of faith. Women were welcome and even the hated Samaritans! The nobodies became somebodies in relationship to Jesus. But in the story this morning, the disciples think that Jesus is just too important to be bothered, especially by children, or pushy parents who want Jesus to take time with them or to bless them. The disciples seemed to have taken on the role of crowd control - keeping the crowd away from Jesus. The lesson says they “scolded” the people about not getting too near to Jesus. And Jesus found out and was angry saying, “*Let the little children come to me.*” (Mark 10.14) What might we do if we were to hear those words spoken directly to us, today? What might we do to bring all the little children to Jesus? What might we do to bring Jesus to the little children? We are not just talking about the children here in the church already, but the millions of children not yet connected to faith in Jesus and a local church here and around the world. What might we learn from Jesus who did not send them away but invited them in and used this as a teachable moment for us all!

Are children, and their families, welcome here? I want you to reminisce with me. Do you remember what happened when you were growing up? When you had those big family gatherings and there was only room at the dining table for the adults, were the nieces and nephews all segregated/relegated to another room and a miniature table, better known as the “children’s table”? Today as we share communion, I am asking us to think about the children and inviting them to share at the table. This is not just the “grown-ups table” this is God’s table, and we are all God’s children. So, this is “all of God’s children’s table.” What do you do today when your family gathers together at a birthday dinner or Thanksgiving? Do you eat at separate tables or mix generations around the table? If you have not yet done it, I would suggest this year that you mix it up and eat generationally around your table this year.

As this is World Communion Sunday, I would like to lift up the children around the world. We have seen a rise in the number of children in our area needing support and using the resources of the food pantry and the HOPE4Kids backpack program. (Remember people will be gathering this Tuesday at 6pm at the New Market church school building to pack the bags for this month. Please help if you can.) And globally, we have watched on the news of children and families fleeing war torn areas and living in refugee camps seeking safety and peace in foreign countries and cultures. The special offering today is to help students from around the world find scholarships to higher education to make a difference in their world.

As a church I wonder about our world. Are children welcome to the sacraments? There are some denominations that believe infants or young children are not to be baptized. Only those who are old enough to understand and make their own decision to follow Christ are invited to participate in baptism. As you may have noticed with all the babies we have baptized here this year, we believe God's grace is a free gift to all, no matter what age, and we welcome babies into the kingdom of God through baptism. But can children take communion? Some churches believe children must first be confirmed or at least take first communion classes to be able take communion. Some churches believe that communion is restricted only to believers which may mean only their own particular brand of believers - not all Christians and not children.

The United Methodist Church believes in an open table where all are invited, and some of us believe that it is even available to those who may not be Christian! My theology says that if Judas, who was about to betray Jesus, was invited to the table, how can we keep anyone away? Communion followed the tradition of the Passover meal - a meal for all of the family. The early church had shared meals which may have been an early practice of communion as a common or community meal. *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* (Acts 2:42) This morning, we invite you all to come, even if you are not a member, and we invite the children; because they can help teach us how to be parents and family and how to be welcomed at the table and into the family of God. Jesus invites the little children, won't you? You are all welcome here and welcome to "God's family table." Alleluia and Amen.

Jesus Loves All of the Children

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 4/3/24

(Tune: Jesus Loves the Little Children)

Jesus loves all of the children,
All the children everywhere:
Strong or weak, or rich or poor,
They are loved forevermore.
Jesus loves all of the children everywhere.

Jesus loves all of the children,
All the children everywhere:
Some talk a lot, and some are shy.
Some are quiet, some ask, "why?"
Jesus loves all of the children everywhere.

Jesus loves all of the children,
All the children everywhere:
All children at any stage,
Even middle or old age.
Jesus loves all of the children everywhere.

Jesus loves all of the children,
All the children everywhere:
Jesus loves both you and me,
Let us likewise love fully.
Let us love all of the children everywhere.