

*Matthew 19:13-15*

<sup>13</sup> Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; <sup>14</sup> but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” <sup>15</sup> And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

*Matthew 19:13-15, 2-12-2017*

Tomorrow we will have another baptism.

Blake Alvin Rivera's parents, Ashley and Luis will bring their new baby son here to be baptized.

They bring Blake here because they understand what this means for their son

just as they did for their daughter Brookelynn when they brought her here just a couple of years ago.

They know that when Blake is baptized he is given the promise of life forever, the forgiveness of his sin, and he receives the Holy Spirit,

the spirit who has come into the world to live in each of us,

to give us faith sufficient for life,

the ability to believe in Jesus and the saving power of his love,

poured out in his death and made complete in his resurrection.

That is a very different perspective from the ones of the moms in our gospel lesson who brought their children to Jesus to have him lay his hands on them and pray for them.

But their perspective is no less powerful.

These moms who brought their children to Jesus had seen with their own eyes what happens when Jesus lays his hands on someone.

He touches disease and pain away.

His touch gives sight to the blind, and peace to the one whose mind exists in chaos.

His touch gives life to the dead.

Of course they would want Jesus to lay his hands on their heads and pray over them.

Even if they didn't understand why, and they probably didn't,

these moms would believe that having this man Jesus lay hands on their child's head and pray would bring blessings to them.

I was not able to find the source of a story I read this week, but it was about a young man named Premanand who I suspect was Hindu,

and had become a Christian.

He was cast out of his family, but would slip back to see his mother who was broken hearted that he had become a Christian,

but still loved him.

She told him that when she carried him in her womb a missionary gave her a copy of one of the gospels, which she read and still had.

She had no desire to become a Christian herself, but sometimes, in the days before he was born,

had longed for him to be like the man in that Gospel, Jesus.

This woman, even though she didn't understand why knew that being like Jesus was a good thing.

This is what we pray will happen to Blake in his baptism and as he lives his life as a baptized child of God;

that he will grow to be like Jesus, Christ like.

Jesus had a special place in his heart for children.

“...it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

In the previous chapter 18, verse 5, Jesus called a little child over to him and as the child stood there in front of him said to those who were gathered there:

“This is the truth I tell you—unless you turn and become as children you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

For Jesus, children are closer to God than anyone else, and that might make some sense to us.

Children, we at least hope, have not been subjected to the difficulties of life that harden the heart

and that have caused us who are older to be callous, cynical and pessimistic.

But I experienced something very different a few days ago when a young lady came to the church in need of some help.

The conversation we had was a very different type of conversation from any I have ever had before.

But the conversation touched me spiritually and made me more aware of my own spirituality,

more aware of my connection with God particularly in my role as pastor,

and my connection to the rest of God's creation.

As this young lady carried on her side of the conversation, before she would say anything, she would close her eyes, take a deep breath, let it out and relax herself,

and then there would be a pause, ...a long pause, ...quiet, before she answered.

It would be a silence that would make most people very uncomfortable.

She meditated before each response and when she did speak she would begin with "I see..."

indicating to me that she had seen some vision, or some visual formulation of what she was going to say.

Now, I know what you are probably thinking right about now.

You are probably thinking that she was on drugs or was mentally ill;

but that was definitely not the case.

Yes this was a very unusual way to communicate,

But this young lady as I learned in our conversation lived in the moment with no ties to material things beyond her immediate needs,

and if you saw her and her van you would know what I mean.

She lived in the moment of her conversations with whomever she was with,

and this allowed her to have few filters interfering with her access to this cosmic spirituality that seemed to guide everything about her,

even every word she spoke.

She was like a child in some ways.

Children have no filters,

they have none of the enlightened education that makes understanding more important than experiencing,

and, which in fact, gets in the way of experiencing the presence and love of Jesus,

none of the wounds that diminish the ability to trust that Jesus would love them,

none of the fear that makes it impossible to love without reservation.

Jesus loves his children.

He loves Blake and his sister Brookelynn.

Jesus loves all his children including....

Maybe along with Blake we can all be free, if only for a moment, to experience Jesus' love, to trust him and to love him.

Let us pray,

Gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to meditate on you; eyes to behold you; ears to listen for your word; a heart to love you; and a life to

proclaim you; through the power of the Sprit of Jesus Christ,  
our Savior and Lord. Amen.