

Pastor Kory's Page

Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD

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Jesus and the Children

Kids worship too!

It's an overlooked detail in Holy Week. You know about Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1-11). You know about Jesus driving the businessmen out of the temple (Matthew 21:12-13). But you might not remember one of the little incidents that happened afterward.

"And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant, and they said to Him, 'Do you hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?' And leaving them, He went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there." (Matthew 21:14-17)

Some of Jesus' best known teaching happened during Holy Week. The apostles especially treasured and preserved what Jesus said and did in His last days before His death.

The praise that Jesus receives from the children in the temple is one of these treasured moments. Perhaps they were adolescent boys on their first pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Matthew doesn't say. But it's not hard to imagine that these children, whatever their ages, were among those who had also been praising Jesus as He paraded into Jerusalem on Sunday.

Now these children dared to praise Jesus within earshot of the chief priests and scribes who were out for His blood. They probably burst into this praise once again because they saw Jesus healing the blind and lame (Mt. 21:14). Did they realize the full significance of what they were exclaiming, that Jesus is David's Son and David's Lord, the world's Savior? It's hard to say. Even the disciples were still trying to grasp Jesus' identity.

We do know this: even though the Jewish leaders wanted to hush these children, Jesus was glad to hear their cheering! He even quotes Psalm 108 to

show that their praises fulfill prophecy. Even though the learned scholars refused to praise their Lord, from the mouths of children, God was still praised.

Jesus loves to hear children's praises. He also made a point to welcome and receive the little children who were brought to Him so that He might touch them or pray for them. When the disciples started rebuking people for this, Jesus turned and rebuked His disciples! "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:13-15)

In both passages, Jesus makes it clear: He loves and welcomes children, and so do we as His Church. Children can be noisy, wiggly, tired and *tiring* in worship, but it's so important for them to learn to sing, pray, listen, confess, and more by watching and imitating their parents and other adults as they worship. Children are a vital part of Christ's Church and He wants them to learn to thank and praise Him and also to have their faith fed by Him in His Word and Sacrament.

Parents can help by quietly explaining the parts of the service to their children, helping them begin to follow along and learn to use the hymnal. Your children will learn to participate by seeing you participate. Parents might also consider training their children at home, setting aside a few minutes to hear Scripture or a devotion and to sing a song or two together just as we do in weekend services.

To parents reading this, keep going! I encourage you to keep worshipping with your children even when it is challenging. It's worth it! You're teaching them that Jesus graciously welcomes, loves, and forgives them. *What can be more important than that?* For other adults reading this, please look for ways to encourage parents. Let them know how much it means for you to worship together with their families and what a difference it will make for their children as they continue to grow in Christ.

Young children might wiggle and doodle and snack their way through much of the service, but even if they're just learning to sing the refrain of a hymn, pray the Lord's Prayer, or say "Thanks be to God," be *glad*, because we know our *Lord* is glad when His children thank and worship Him!