

Matthew 18:1-7, 10; 19:13-15  
Go Get Em'  
Sunday January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017

A story is told of a little girl and her mom who had had an exceptionally hard day of getting along with each other.



Well finally it was time for mom to wash her face and as she was doing so her little daughter was watching. The mom noticed another grey hair and blurted out, “You know every time you are bad I get another grey hair?”

The girl was quiet for a moment, and hung her head, and then suddenly popped up wide eyed and said, “Grandma’s totally grey! You must have been a very bad, bad girl!!”



Our Children are always watching and listening and learning. And thank God when we mess up we have someone we are following too, who teaches about grace and forgiveness, and offers new life.

Remember from the front we look like sheep



and from the back we look like a shepherd?



And that’s because we are following the Good Shepherd.



Let's see what that Good Shepherd is saying to us in the first 7 verses of our Scripture, these being both a warning and an exhortation on two levels.

First, the disciples are thinking that one of them is actually the greatest in the Kingdom of God, of course besides Jesus, but that's what they are thinking for that's what they ask. **"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"**

Jesus essentially answers none of you if you think it is you, any of you. He makes this point by doing the first "Object Lesson" of the Christian faith. **He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**

He said they were so far off from becoming Great in the Kingdom of Heaven, because they, at that point, weren't even in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We miss that if we read over quickly the words **"unless you change"**. Other translations read "unless you turn", which is another way of saying, "unless you repent."

We at this point would have thought the disciples were in the Kingdom for they certainly thought so, jockeying for the Greatest Positions, but Jesus is saying if that is your intent and desire you aren't even in the running much less in the Kingdom. Their pride and arrogance are called out.



Jesus goes on to say that unless you are like the child he brought forward, unless you are humble, you aren't in the Kingdom.

You having greatness there is but a fantasy. So you got to be humble like a child to get in. What does that mean? There are many ways preachers and scholars have interpreted a child's humility through the years.

But the best interpretation I have seen is: **trust, obedience to God, and service.**

**The "greatest is a servant of all." "The first are indeed last"** in the Kingdom of God.

I found out in my studies for this message that the word Rabbi literally means... Most including me would think "teacher". But actually it literally means, **"Great one."** I know it eventually came to mean simply "teacher", but the literal meaning is Great One. What an ego builder.

No wonder the disciples wanted greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven, because on one level they just wanted to be like their teacher, they wanted to be addressed as "great one." They were human, but so are we.

They wanted to be Great, they wanted to be the Great Ones, so Jesus says, "OK, to be great you got to take care of those in our society that have no status, power, or worth. You want to be great in the Kingdom of God then take care of the children.



In Jesus' society children indeed had no status, power, or worth, and neither did the people who took care of them, their mothers.

Jesus is actually introducing a radical way of looking at people. He was saying that all people of any age from BEFORE birth to old age, male or female they were all of great value. In fact the way you take care of them is the way you take care of me. The way you welcome them is the way you welcome me.

Now the next level of meaning in these scriptures has to do with the word “Children”. It actually has a double meaning. It speaks of actual physical children, and it also is a reference to a **Rabbi’s disciples**, in fact, more specifically “Young Disciples”.

Most of Chapters 18 and 19 of Matthew run on these two levels. The reference switches back and forth between physical children and disciples of a rabbi. This helps verse 10 make a bit more sense, **“Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.”**

It’s hard to conceive of despising a child, but how about another Believer? Apparently despising another Believer was pretty common, especially for a group of men wanting Jesus to determine which one of them was the greatest, and in another passage even the pecking order of the great ones.

A lot of ego and pride was present then, but how about today? How often have we looked down our nose at someone else and their belief and declared our self to be greater, and separated ourselves into groups and parties of people who think the same.

In Paul’s day it was very common. In fact in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of 1st Corinthians we read Paul condemning such division into the parties of: Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. Paul reminds them there is only one Christ, and we are all one in him.

Today in modern Christianity and even in our own denomination there are divisions, people looking down their noses at others convinced of their superior intellect, theology or moral position. Jesus would say, and in fact I do believe he does say, like he said to the disciples who would be great “turn”, repent. Seek to serve and in the serving you will find your greatness.

**Pride is sinful!** Great caution needs to be exercised both in our attitude towards children, and our attitude toward other believers who we feel are young, and do not measure up theologically or intellectually. **Their angel stands in the very presence of God.**

And in terms of physical children and working with Children it is hard. As my old friend Jim Lewis used to say and he was 87 when he passed about 20 years ago, “Children are noisy, they are messy and they break things. It’s how they learn.” And I might add children are expensive too!

Jim Lewis was a milk truck driver for many years. His church calling was teaching Jr. High. He told me at one point in the early 60’s he had 110 Jr. Highers in his class. That was in the midst of the baby boom when it took only about 27 families to have 110 children. Today it takes twice that amount of families to have that many children.

Now verses 13 to 15 read, “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.

We can assume that the moms brought the children to Jesus who in his day were a class of people with little worth and no status. The disciples as you can see drove them away to which Jesus essentially replies, “Don’t do that, go get em’, now, and bring them back!”

We as Vista Church need to hear and heed Jesus’ words for the current generation of children. **Go get em’!** We need to realize we are never too old to love, receive and welcome children and in that way we welcome Jesus. We are never too old to welcome children here on Sunday morning and on other days of the week. Remember we are grandparents and great grandparents. Who can love and spoil children better than we!?

Well we have been doing lots of things right in this area here at Vista Church. And we are learning how to go get em and love em’ and welcome them even better.

Today we have started a “Family Worship Sunday” once a quarter. Having families in worship together like the Christian church has done through the ages was a radical concept in Jesus’ day. In Jesus’ day families didn’t worship together and in fact, in many of the religious cults of Jesus’ day the men and women would not worship together.

We are living out here the verse from Psalm 71: **“Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me.”**

We indeed are seeking to proclaim God’s mighty power, acts and love to a new generation, this generation represented by the children, youth and families present here. It is a whole church effort and here’s how it’s done.

Barbara Johnson and Shirley Miller have been long term teachers of our children and youth Sunday School program and in the past two years those age groups have been growing.

Jean Rupe took over leading the Children, Youth, and Families Ministry committee.

We hired Valerie Hammons as a pastoral assistant to help with the children, youth and families. I was a Youth Pastor for 24 years and can’t get it out of my blood, but also I can’t be directly involved in this important ministry, one given and sanctioned by Jesus Christ in these verses today. So I asked the church to hire an assistant to do this and more tasks and Valerie was gifted in these areas so here she is.

We are involved in the Snak Pack ministry that serves 60 children a week for 36 weeks a year at a total cost of \$9500 of which we give \$4000 and Santa Catalina Catholic Church gives \$5500. I told you children were expensive. Thank you to all who volunteer there and Kathy for leading it and those who donate.

We provide help to 145+ students in Agua Prieta helping several obtain not only high school education, but also college.

We had interns last summer who learned a lot and we did too.

We have 8 youth in our confirmation class the first class in many years.

Well done good and faithful servants and the opportunities do not end. There is a scripture that says, **“Work while you can for the evil days are coming when no one can work.”** I thought that just referred to the Tribulation when I was young, but now that I am older I realize that the day comes when you are too old to do some types of work.

So if you haven't reached that stage yet, here and also listed in the bulletin are some opportunities to “Go Get Em’ for Jesus and fulfill Jesus’ call in our scripture today.

First, we need **substitute teachers** for Barbara, Shirley and Jan. Not only for Sunday School but also for the nursery and yes we will soon have a new resident there named Elizabeth Rose. Pray for her.

**2<sup>nd</sup>, we need a teacher or teachers for our older children 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**3<sup>rd</sup>, volunteers for the VBS/Art camp** this coming Summer.

**4<sup>th</sup>, Help and leadership for a new Summer program called “Terrific Tuesdays”.** Yes you guessed it. It will be on Tuesday and will essentially be a one day a week VBS.

**5<sup>th</sup>, Help with special events: Rodeo Sunday, Conference Youth event.**

**6<sup>th</sup> Task force for Interns**

**7<sup>th</sup> Church Representative for our Scouting programs both girl and boy scouts.** Duties would be to go to their meeting, have fun, develop relationships deep enough to invite the families into our program.

Note who to call in the bulletin.

Finally, lets here from the children themselves and what they need from you which is you!

**ROLL "I'LL NEED YOU"**

Indeed our children, this generations children needs you! What is God saying and what are YOU going to do?

In Jesus' name amen.