

PENTECOST 5 YEAR A
ZECHARIAH 9:9-12
ROMANS 7:15-25a
MATTHEW 11:16-19, 25-30
JULY 8, 9, 2017

I believe children know how to be in a good and right relationship with God. Jesus spoke of us having a childlike faith. A childlike faith says that I trust God and listen to God's word. I believe what God says to be true and a childlike faith says that I follow the Lord based on the belief. Our relationship with God is based on grace through faith. I watch children and they enjoy playtime. They enjoy using their imaginations to supply what they do not have. God blessed us with our imaginations. Our imaginations allow us to be creative in our thoughts and our relationships with each other and God. As kids get older their play times are different. They no longer play with less complicated things and evolve into things that are more grown up. They might begin with things like building blocks and Legos but then grow into video games. As they grow older kids tend to use their imaginations less. In my opinion it takes less imagination to place a video game than it does to play other kinds of games or to invent games to play. I watch our neighbor kids and Jeremiah play outside. They might begin on our neighbor's trampoline and then move onto something else because they get bored. I watch as they try to decide what to do next. When there is a disagreement some might quit or not play anything that the others are playing.

Matthew 11:16, 17 **“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ¹⁷‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’**

These words from Matthew 11:16-19 and 25-30 are about having the right response to John the Baptist and to Jesus. They are about daring to hear the word of the Lord and then participate in the life and ministry of God. These first couple of verses are about children playing make believe. In the market

place the children wanted to play house. The girls wanted to play “wedding” but the boys did not want to play. The boys wanted to play “funeral” but the girls would not play. When they could not agree on what to play they didn’t do anything. They just quit. They no longer wanted to play and so they don’t do anything. As people of God we give the right response in the right situation. In Revelation 3, John writes to the church at Laodicea. He refers to them as being lukewarm in their ministry. They were neither hot nor cold. They took the blessings of God and stopped doing the ministry they were called to.

This teaching of Jesus comes on the heels of John’s request for more information. In the verses leading up to these verses, John the Baptist sent his disciples with a question for Jesus. “Are you the One that is to come or shall we expect someone else?” Jesus answered John’s messengers with words that tell of what Jesus is doing and teaching. What Jesus is doing and teaching reveals that he is the one that is to come and he is the one people need to follow.

Jesus referred to the people that would not listen to John or to Jesus as “this generation.” John came with a message of repentance and returning to the Lord. The religious leaders would not take him seriously but had him thrown into prison. They said that John came from the wilderness and he would not eat or drink with them. He preached judgment. He preached that people should hear the word of God and respond by turning to God.

Jesus came bringing the kingdom near. His message was one of Good News and of life but they would not listen to him either. They said Jesus was a glutton and a drunkard because he ate and drank with everyone. Those that condemned John for not eating and drinking also condemned Jesus for eating and drinking. The truth is that the ministry of John and the ministry of Jesus were both important. They were necessary for the kingdom of God to come near. John came to prepare the way for the Lord. Jesus came that we would

have life but that we might also know how to be in relationship with God and with each other.

As children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ we celebrate with those that are getting married. We mourn with those that experience death in their families. Many cry at weddings but usually the tears are tears of joy for a man and a woman that come together as husband and wife. Weddings are times for celebration. We celebrate God putting the man and woman together and making them one body. God also celebrates at weddings because God ordained marriage as the most important or all human relationships.

Many cry at funerals but for different reason. These are tears of sadness because a loved one has died. At funerals we embrace those that are hurting because we want to share the burden of the loss. Because we are children of God and followers of Jesus Christ we share in the times of death and we seek to be a loving presence among those mourning. Weddings and funerals are real life experiences. Because they are real life experiences we are compassionate with families and friends gathered for each. We minister to people as Jesus did.

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Jesus says that we need to learn from him. How do we learn from Jesus? We teach our children the books of the Bible from the earliest ages. We also tell and read Bible stories from children’s Bibles because we want our kids to know those stories. We continue reading and studying the Bible into adulthood because we need to know. Jesus says that we need to learn from him. He is saying that we do more than just read and study. We use what we have learned for the Lord. We learn how to minister to God’s people. We reach out in love beyond the doors of our sanctuary and we minister to those that are hurting.

We are not lukewarm in our ministry. We use our imaginations to find new ways to serve the Lord.

Jesus says that we should come to him. We are invited to come to Jesus and find rest for our souls. Jesus scolds his opponents for their hardness of heart but then invites them to come to him and find rest. You and I are invited to take the yoke of Jesus. The yoke of Jesus means we are shoulder to shoulder with our Lord. We go where he goes and we do the work that he does. The way of Jesus is the right way. When we are yoked with Jesus we are doing the ministry God wants from us. We work with Jesus and we follow where he is leading. When one is celebrating we laugh with them. When they are mourning we cry with them and we minister to them. We learn from Jesus and we do what he asks us to do. AMEN