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Introduction speech

Connecting the summer service motto to the words of the Bible



The text of the summer service motto is from Mark's Gospel where Jesus greets children and those that brought them, and where he speaks to the disciples.

"Mark 10:13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. [Matt. 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17]

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: **for of such is the kingdom of God.**"

15 "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." [Matt. 11:25, Matt. 18:3, Matt. 21:16; 1. Cor. 14:20]

16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. [Mark. 9:36]"

Jesus and children in the Gospel

- Here the focus is on the teachings of Jesus, and his actions in relation to the parts about children.

In this portion, children were brought upon Jesus, to be **blessed** and touched; and so he would place His hands upon them to pray with them and for them. **Those who brought the children** are not described much, but we can interpret who would wish to do so. They understood who Jesus was through faith.

Luke separately mentions as a part of this story how **Jesus called the children upon him, even though** the disciples were deterring.

Jesus speaks about children in different contexts as well, and showed with his **actions the** value of children, where **children and child-likeness** were at the basis of **understanding the basics of faith.**

In Matt. 18 and Mark 9. **Jesus reminded the disciples** who were arguing amongst themselves about each other's greatness, asking Jesus **who of them was the greatest in the Kingdom of God.** Even then, Jesus brought up the **child** and encouraged the disciples to remain humble, to see themselves as needing one another and as being **dependent on other people. A child sees and understands this, and acts accordingly. He is the greatest.**

In these contexts, Jesus also sincerely discusses the **aggravation of a child, of leading him to stumble,** he warns of this with the thoughts that **before this occurs,** it would be easier for all involved, that the seducer be thrown into the ocean with a rock around his neck.

The same portion talks about how **Jesus warned about disdain against children, including** the underprivileged (adults), “those, in those times of the **world of the values of men, in the religious world and in the world of society, small, worthless**”. Jesus said how “the angels of them in heaven always see the face of my Heavenly Father.”

Jesus describes the value and place of a child in faith and in God’s Kingdom when he says (Matt. 18:5): **“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.”** In this, is the presence of faith, unity and inclusion, the Saviour, and the Kingdom of God.

As such are also children, the children of the times, **that God has granted unto us, amongst us and into our care**. They bring the presence of Christ unto us, in the Gospel and unity of faith, and as we have seen: in the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

The teachings of Jesus and speaking about the Kingdom of God

In the motto for Summer Services becomes apparent **God’s Kingdom and those who live in it**. And in this, through the word and in this context, childlikeness.

I will present some things about **God’s Kingdom** briefly, which are important in this context.

God’s Kingdom is essential in God’s word and His message to us as believers.

God’s Kingdom was at the center of God’s preachings. Here are some examples of this:

Jesus proclaimed a message of Joy, the Gospel of God’s Kingdom, (Matt. 4:8), the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 9:35). He said to turn to repentance, **since the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand** (Matt. 4:17). Jesus spoke in parables about that which God’s Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven is; and about the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 16:19) and the treasures of the Kingdom, which are **only revealed to those following Jesus** (Luuk. 8:10).

We are near one of those treasures when we think about **what it is like to live in God’s Kingdom as a child does, in a childlike way**.

Jesus sent his own to proclaim the call to the **Kingdom of God**, the most important call. He also said to **take care of one another, to strengthen each other in faith and battle, to take care of our own faith and the faith of others in the presence of the Holy Spirit**. This is the reason why Summer Services are arranged, for these things which are the most important, which are supported by other activity.

In all of this, the **main message is the same**: believe in Jesus, believe in God, believe in the forgiveness of Sins. This is how you will enter the Kingdom of God. The caller gives the gift of faith, by Grace, to the sinful one. God begins to live in you, the connection is so powerful. When Jesus dwells in you, you are a partaker of blessing prepared and granted by God, in perfect righteousness.

All children are partakers of this Kingdom, even before birth. And those, who have had the blessing of living in faith since birth, like many of us.

Jesus told his own: Seek ye the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (goodwill), and everything else will be granted onto you (Matt. 6:33, Luuk. 12:31). Seek, ask, when living in the Kingdom of God, and look at everything in this perspective. **Watch and plan** believing, trusting, praying, even when thinking about your temporal life and guidance with this in mind. **In faith, living** even the rest of this life.

Temporal matters need not be turned into Spiritual matters, but they can be taken care of faith and simple **trust in God**, even using reasoning, resources, wisdom, but also by asking for help and support from others. We can also trust that help can be found. **Childlike trust** is also made of many questions, **presenting our own doubts**, releasing our worries and finding relief in those things.

The call to faith and to God's Kingdom is the most important thing. It is, after all, a call from Sin and damnation into eternal life. It is necessary, as this is the only way to heaven and back to unity with God. Also living in the Kingdom here is essential. That is where we can take care of our life of faith. **Even here can be one point of discussion:** what does childlike caring of our life of faith and trust look like amongst our sisters and brothers in faith?

At the focus of faith and salvation is the belief in the redemption work of Christ. This includes that our Sins are forgiven thanks to the salvation works of Christ. **This is the simplicity of faith.**

This basic foundation of faith cannot be explained with reason or with logic. It is a thing of faith, as is the mystery of how God gives birth to this faith and takes care of it. It is a **paradox which is in controversy with itself.** It is insanity in the eyes of the world. But God has proclaimed this to his Own. This simple faith of the heart given to a Believer brings us peace. Incomprehensible peace with God, and the peace of our conscience (Phil. 4:7). In other parts of the new testament, especially Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews speak of this.

A child is a partaker of this faith, thanks to Christ's work of atonement, not because he is without fault or sin. Since the conception of the child, he is also a partaker of Inherited Sin. Christ's salvation work also began from conception, so that salvation would be given to each and everyone. This is something else that cannot be understood through reason. A matter of faith, rooted in the Word of God. Even in this, it is a part of childlike faith, when the children came to Jesus to be blessed. The blessing of Jesus is the truth to them, **the truth of the simplicity of faith and unity with the Spirit.** As the Hosanna -calls from the mouths of the children, thanks and joy during Jesus last trip to the temple (Matt. 21:15).

On childlike faith in God's Kingdom

Childlikeness is hard to explain in a few words or in a comprehensive way. Simply put, **the most essential parts of it are apparent** even on the summer service web pages: **"There, the simplicity of faith, God's care and promise to trust in Him" are expressed.**

In the Finnish bible, the words “**as children**” are used to describe the characteristics of those in God’s Kingdom. I also use original phrases and phrases used in other languages to describe the same idea.

In the part of **Matt. 18** which I already referenced, the disciples asked Jesus, **who is the greatest in God’s Kingdom**. Here, Jesus brings forth a child and says:” **Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.**” (Matt 18:4)

He who understands himself to be below others, **does not have the need to bring himself up**. The children were here in this place, and settled, knew and understood themselves in the part. They were not recognized highly in these times. Even Jesus’ disciples in these times and parts of the Gospel did not regard children as anything, but reprimanded those bringing them forth.

A childlike person notes and recognizes that He is no better than others, but rather, below others, **is not worthy of being God’s child**, to make himself so that he would be worthy with His own merits, being, wisdom or discoveries. **God awakens the conscience of a person and his humility** when He calls. Then, a person notices, recognizes and confesses his sinfulness. **God prepares his own for this**, and keeps his own.

Jesus also spoke of those with a childlike mind. To be a childlike person (Matt. 11:25, Luk. 10:21) means to have the **open and trusting** mind of a child. (Hidden from the wise and the prudent (Matt. 11:25), God’s will (Matt. 11:26), the disciples returned here from a mission trip (Luk. 10:17-21). Those with a childlike mind had **received the Word from the disciples**, when they heard that the Kingdom of God is at hand (Luk. 10:9). Jesus thanked God for it.

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said (Matt. 5:3): **Blessed are the poor in spirit (pitiful - Biblia), For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. “God blesses who you are poor (Luk 6:20), Jesus said to the disciples**. A different word was used in a spiritual sense for the poor, than that used to describe temporal poorness. This is why, in this portion of the Bible, we can recognize the use of the word in a spiritual sense.

Spiritually poor, **lacking and insufficient**, were **accepting of God’s Grace and His help**. They prayed for salvation from the Lord and **waited for help from God. They trust that they will receive the help which they need**. These poor have recognized their **helplessness**. They also recognize their sinfulness, and cannot trust in their own **righteousness**.

Rather, **they hold onto and trust God’s eternal richness**: grace and the forgiveness of sins. They place their trust in the peace granted by God, and **they have peace with God** and eternal life.

There are many **similarities in being childlike and spiritually poor**. He who is spiritually childlike is **poor from his own part**. He does not have his own sources for strength. **To him, grace is necessary for salvation**. He is **dependent on God and on faith**, he needs and desires care from the Kingdom of God, the care granted by sisters and brothers through the Holy Spirit.

Humility and a childlike mind are a gift from God. Not our own efforts or understanding.

God **awakens and calls**, and grants faith as a gift, but also gives the battle as a gift. **Do I need to do anything? Will I keep faith regardless?**

God has promised to take care of us. How? This can remain a question of reflection for this evening and on your way home - as a discussion topic.

When God calls, He also gives strength to remain believing. **He gives a childlike mind, and spiritually a poor and humble mind** to receive the Gospel, and through it, the gift of faith. We also accept that not everything is in our own control. God gives trust also into that grace and the forgiveness of sins carry us, and that this is enough.

Redemption does not require anything from oneself.

Other descriptions besides "child likeness" can be found about the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, we do not have the time to look at them now. However, I will bring one example from Paul, which speaks about the nature of God's Kingdom.

"For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). This is essential and describes the core that a believer can live true every day. How great is this? May this resonate with us as a topic of discussion.

In the midst of daily battles of life

In the midst of the daily battles of life we can consider if we, ourselves, are acceptable, child-like. Do I really know how to be child-like when I doubt and sometimes stumble? A child also doubts, and sometimes fails. Doubts are living signs. God knows us to be doubting and sinful. He does not rebuke us because of this or forsake his own. He knows His own and has prepared a way on which we can travel to Heaven's home. That is His wish.

We do not think about our sinfulness every moment even as believers, but in the midst of our daily lives, **we also believe the truth of the forgiveness of sins which brings us joy and peace. Every moment our sins are forgiven, even now.**

And is it not so that you also believe this? You do not always reason or do things which would make you better. **You live the free life of a child of God.**

On the other hand, we are **sinful. The enemy** attacks us, bringing forth doubts about our faith, the forgiveness of sins, our faulty journey and our true sinfulness.

He would want to distance you from faith and from the peace of God. To make you question your **trust in faith, in the sufficiency of grace and trust in God, to drive us away from leaning on God's grace as**

the basis of our faith. The enemy of the Soul tries to bring God's child away from trusting in God's guidance in even other things than our faith alone. Even in very temporal matters, the enemy wants us to give up our faith.

The carnal mind on the other hand would like to do acts to try to prove **oneself worthy unto God, when** it should be focused on staying in God's Kingdom and in faith. It would like to prove itself better than others and show goodness unto God. It would not like to settle in only God's guidance and grace, and the simplicity of faith and the gospel.

The enemy preaches the sermon of unbelief and failing so strongly, that it considers it impossible that God's grace would be sufficient for the undeserving.

The enemy would like to take away childlike trust and faith.

The possibility of falling into temptation, getting distanced from faith, is a **real possibility.** Those before us have said that the three-fold enemy: Satan, the World and our own Flesh, tries to get us to give up faith and that childlike and simple trust in God and in His grace. The battle of a Christian is real, not only seemingly so.

God and sin battle within us against one another. A believer has a Godly mind and a desire to fulfill God's will, but the sin which lives in us is against this. We live in this kind of playing field and controversy.

God grants us strength for the battle, so that we would remain believing and have the strength to believe and take care of our conscience. God grants us the desire and mind for the good fight of Faith, and strengthens us in it. The fight of faith is not an act through which we are saved, but it is a gift from God. The salvation work of Christ saves us.

Jesus encouraged and taught us to be functional and to take responsibility, to be caring and to love one another. Furthermore, He even inspired wisdom and purity. Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews encourage us into maturity and to throw away childishness.

Are these a part of faith, which is childlike? Or do these take away from the childlikeness of Faith?

Yes, these are a part of faith. Although our faith and salvation are not rooted in these. God however wants us to fulfill His will while living on this Earth, to do His work, so that we may grow in faith and grace. And isn't it so that as sinful children of God, we want to think as God and to fulfill His Will, and be of a Christ-like mind.

Childlike faith is a privilege

The simplicity of faith and the childlike belief is a privilege for us. Through this, **God has seen it good for us to keep** us in connection to Him. He has seen that there is nothing else of us, nothing of our Own merit. He brings the pathway to Him so low, that even the most sinful and lost one can reach Him. A

believing person recognizes this and His heart becomes content and trusts in this (SL. 43:3:) God also gives us understanding, however much we may need it.

The amazing care of God

Jesus said: I am with you every day, even unto the end of the World. That is two of you shall agree on Earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them. These have been written in the Gospel of Matthew, especially in the connection where Jesus spoke about forgiveness (Matt. 18:19-20). There, God's Kingdom is simple and humble, and Christ is caring for the hearts of the believers. Here lies the **basis for God's care.**