

Matthew 18:1-20, (Ezekiel 33:7-9, Psalm 32:1-7, Romans 13:1-10)  
A Child of God

Grace, peace, and mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

This morning the church has given us much to consider as God's people. Ezekiel receives a Word from God to give the people warning for concerning the consequences of their transgressions against the God. The message is always repent. Turn from your evils ways and receive forgiveness and a new start. The response in the psalm is a prayer thanking God for the His forgiveness. "I said I will confess my sins to the Lord, and he forgives the iniquities of my sins. Happy are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered." The Epistle from Romans deals with the place of civil government in relation to our faith. Paul says this authority is instituted by God for order in society. This could be a good one to consider has we ask who is qualified to lead our country for the next four years. That is a question which will be answered on November 3. I would encourage all of you to prayerfully consider how to cast your vote. That is all I will say about that because the question that our gospel has nothing to do with who has the best presidential qualifications. Is to do with qualifications for the Kingdom of Heaven?"

The question had to be on the disciples' minds or they would not had asked it. "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" They had argued about on the road. Where do each of us fit into the pecking order? They left everything to follow Jesus, jobs, families, and an old way of life. Jesus would catch them talking about who the greatest would be among themselves.

As usual Jesus surprises them with his answer. Jesus calls a child and places the child right in the middle of them. You see this child? Unless you become like a child you will never enter the Kingdom. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest. The child is the greatest. How are they the greatest. What is it that qualifies a child for the Kingdom of Heaven? They have no experience or even training. In fact childhood is a stage that one must pass through to get all privileges of a grown up. And the quicker they get through that phase the better.

In my former life as physical education teacher, a kindergarten teacher brought her class to me on the first day. The first words out of her mouth were, "These children are so immature." I just looked at them and thought, they are 5 years. What do expect? 40 year old maturity level in a five year old body? Our society does force our children to grow up and grow up quickly. And seems to be happening earlier and earlier.

But Jesus places a child in the midst of the disciples as model of greatness and a model of what qualifies one for the Kingdom of Heaven. As far as the Kingdom of Heaven goes childhood is not stage to pass quickly through, but the place to be. What is it that qualifies a child for the kingdom of heaven? It would seem their utter dependence on others. If left on their own they would not survive long. If you think about it a Christian without Christ would not survive long in this world. That would mean certain death. Without Jesus would mean complete separation from God and spending eternity in hell. If greatness in this world's eyes what you want, forget it. If you desire to enter the kingdom of heaven Jesus says become like children, completely dependent on God for everything. Upon the Heavenly Father's goodness and mercy, your talents and skills, for your food and drink, for house and home, and especially for your life and forgiveness of all the wrongs you have done, and His salvation. Upon His Holy Spirit for guidance, for making good godly choices, in the ways we use our resources for God's purpose, and the HS to give us faith. None is possible without the Holy Spirit.

This thinking as Christians is different from the world. The world tells us to become a grown up and then you can become your own person and do what you want. To act your age as a Christian means to act each day like a newborn child of God. To act as a new born child means to remember your baptism daily, confessing your sins and failures to a loving God and receiving God's assurance of forgiveness and a new start and new life as child of God.

To be grown up in the world is to gain the world's wisdom, and think in worldly ways, and your status depends on what you do and the size of your check book. To live as a child of God is to be formed in the wisdom of God's Word. Asking God, in each reading what person in Christ are you calling me to be?

Who is qualified for the Kingdom of Heaven? I would say that all who feel unqualified because they have fallen short of the glory of God. They realize the need to be totally dependent like a child on God. This means to be totally dependent on the one who went low for you. How low was that for you? Jesus God's Son did not let his equality with God as something to be exploited, He humbled Himself and became human, born of the the virgin Mary in Bethlehem. He became servant to seek the lost, even leaving 99 sheep on a hill to seek that one lost sinner in the wilderness to rescue him. He went so low that Humbled himself even to the point of death, even the lowest of low, a death on the cross to win for you salvation and forgiveness. He did for your feet and eyes and hands that cause you to sin. He did this, not for certain sins or for some of your sins, he did it wipe away all your sins. There is no sinner too low for Jesus. He has done this for you on he cross to call you as child of God so that can have a place in the kingdom and place at the table. The Kingdom of Heaven is for all who cling to this promise and depending on God in Jesus alone as children of God.

And because of all this, as a child of of God we do not need to step out on the campaign trail stumping before God touting good works and accomplishments trying earn a vote toward our salvation. To be a child of God is simply to be loved by our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. You are qualified because because of Jesus and His work on the cross and His resurrection confirms it!

If you want to be great, become like child. But do not be childish and whiny and all that, but be thankful for all that God has done for you. As child I would go outside and pick flowers for my mother because of her love for me and my love for her. Most of the time I would pick those pretty yellow flowers that grew in the yard. Yes, I now know they were weedy flowers, but to my mother they were beautiful and what I had to offer. They were given freedom of the love that had been shown to me as her son.

The flowers or response to God's love for us is our good deeds, not to earn salvation, but because we are saved. These works done in the freedom of child of God to be our gift of worship and praise and to benefit our neighbor. Their nothing more precious to our Father in heaven that we love because we have been loved. That we give because we have received so much. That we forgive because we have been forgiven. In all these we grow to be more Christ like; being more Christ like we become more child like. And may we enjoy the freedom of being a child of God being loved like a child of God.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen