

PASTOR SCOTT'S

MONTHLY MESSAGE



Children: Then and Now

This story appears in all three of the synoptic gospels, "The people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them." And uniformly, "But the disciples rebuked them." (Matthew 19:13)

It turns out the rebuking wasn't finished, "When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'" (Mark 10:14) The disciples were just being good purveyors of society's perspective on children in 30 AD; just reflecting the attitude that they were of little-to-no value. The disciples were essentially saying "*Don't trouble this important man with these rug-rats, these munchkins, these triflings ...*" Jesus wasn't having any of that, "...*these are the owners of the kingdom of God!*" (Matt 9:14b)

It is wonderful that our contemporary perspective on children has improved from that time. But, there is still work to be done.

Jim Fitzgerald, CEO of Intermountain, spoke to the Presbytery Retreat held at our church on February 24 and 25 about the brain development damage done to children who receive insufficient nurture and protection. Some of this fault lies in decisions individual parents make; some of this fault lies with society creating unsafe environments for children - extensive poverty, poor food options, reducing and eliminating the safety nets that could help these children and their parents. Sometimes it seems as though we haven't progressed as much as we should have in following this teaching of Christ about welcoming children.

Do the "adults" of today really value and respect children? This past September the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) expired. Did legislators rush to put it back in place? No. Not until more than four months later, when their backs were up against the wall about another government shutdown, did they restore the program.

After 17 were killed in the Parkland school shooting the surviving students became vocal about this ongoing carnage in America. How are the "adults" reacting? "But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they were indignant. 'Do you hear what these children are saying?' they asked him. 'Yes,' replied Jesus." (Matt 21:15-16).

No sooner did these survivors from Parkland speak up than supposed adults began attacking them. There were repeated claim these weren't students but "crisis actors" - a *pants-on-fire* lie. Supposed adults claimed these children were too young to understand politics. As the students planned gatherings and marches supposed adults claimed that some other group must be behind this because "teenagers can't plan big events." Tweets and posts emerged attacking these children; the President's son even "liked" some of these attacking posts.

Why is it these "adults" want to act so much like the *chief priests* and *teachers of the law* in dismissing children? Is it that articulate children making well reasoned arguments and showing the drive to plan national marches and protests doesn't jive with the picture media tries to paint of "millennials" as lazy and entitled? Is it that these children are making too visible the failure of the "adults" to accomplish anything?

Or, is it that these children are in fact wiser than these adults? "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.'" (Matt 11:25) Children have shown us their wisdom in the past - right here in America.

In 1904 Mother Jones marched with 7,000 children on the capitol to end the practice of the "captains of industry" lining their pockets from stealing the future of children that worked in their mines and factories - Child Labor Laws came into being.

In the civil rights movement Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. didn't want children involved in marches and demonstrations out of fear of how the white bigots would harm them. Some children slipped into the Birmingham march. The

pictures of white officers washing these children away with fire hoses and these children being mauled by attack dogs that white officers released on them turned the tide on civil rights.

During the Vietnam war it was the children that forced the adults to come to terms with the death numbers coming out of Vietnam. Finally the adults did something about ending the war.

Children have led us to a better world in the past. Where may the children of today and their wisdom be leading society now? Are we, as individuals and a society, ready to see the value in children that Jesus clearly saw? Are we, individually and socially, ready to nurture and protect children, and then respect them and learn from their wisdom?

Pastor Scott