

SIGN OF GOD'S LOVE
July 15, 2018 –Matthew 19: 13-15
The Church of the Covenant

I love those moments when child-like faith breaks through. I loved just a week ago when a little boy was so excited by the children's message that he jumped down the three steps from the Chancel area onto the sanctuary floor. Kerplow. That's the way a child would do it. I loved the moment when a Father and his little son were serving as ushers together and the Father was standing next to the son as the little guy was receiving the offering. The look on both their faces was amazing. I love the moment when the little children will gather the Change for a Change collection in the little tin buckets. They are so cute you just want to empty your entire pocket of change for a worthy cause. And I love the moment when the children come forward at 943 to place their offerings in the basket. My favorite one was when the little girl was spinning around and twirling like a ballerina as she brought her offering forward. O, that Presbyterians would dance when they give to the Lord!!!! All these are signs of God's love...

In our Bible passage for today from Matthew 19 Jesus says two important things to two important groups of people in the church. **First**, Jesus says to the little children –*“Let the children come to me...”* (Matthew 19: 14) Jesus is saying He wants the little children to come to Him. He tells the other adult disciples and that He wants nothing to hinder them from doing so. So Jesus wants the little children to come to Him. **Second** thing He is saying to the adult disciples. He declares: *“For to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”* (v. 14) Jesus is saying we as adult disciples need to enter the kingdom of heaven as a little child. We need to set aside our very adult concerns, our problem oriented view of the world and life, our need to understand everything and control everything, our adult doubts and disillusionments and disappointments, and we need to jump three steps down from the Chancel, and we need to smile and twirl and dance when we give to the Lord, and we need to understand at the very root of everything that God is doing for us through Jesus Christ is to give us joy and hope and reasons to rejoice and to believe again. Perhaps you need to have a joyous, childlike faith and believe in the absolute goodness of God, our good-good Father, once again.

These little ones are the signs of God's love to us. They are God's reminders to us not to take life too seriously, not to take ourselves too seriously, and to remember that a loving, good-good Father, holds our hand every step along the way. That's why we must as adults never hinder them from entering into the presence of Jesus –WE NEED THEM to remind us HOW WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE in the presence of Jesus...how we are to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And when you think about it, these Bible verses are also the basis for our church mission statement. We are to KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE HIM KNOWN TO THE NEXT GENERATION. Certainly, we can know Him in times of trial or trouble but HE doesn't want to leave us there. Jesus wants us to know HIM in such a way that we may have delight and rejoice and have JOY at the very center of who we are, just because of His presence in our lives. That's what it means to KNOW CHRIST. And we *want* these little children all around us. We want them to come and to know Jesus in their joy and child-like faith. We want them to know HIM as we

know HIM. That's what it means to MAKE HIM KNOW TO THE NEXT GENERATION. Our Mission Statement is a SIGN of God's love for us...and for little children, as well...

We are receiving as a church an amazing gift and that is the gift of a sculpture commissioned by generous donors by the renowned sculptor, Alan Cotrill. He is the sculptor who sculpted the magnificent piece of artwork that is The Sacrifice that is in our Commons Area. He also has done three others in Washington, notably Washington and Jefferson standing at the corner of Lincoln and Beau on W&J's campus. Our sculpture is entitled "Let the Children come to Me" and is a representation of this Bible verse and of Jesus' joyous reception of little ones. It will be lively and alive; a very human Jesus delighted with children and little children delighted and rejoicing in His presence. It will be positioned in the grassy area where there used to be the Family Promise House, in the quadrant, appropriately enough, closest to the Preschool Entrance. Every child that comes to The Church of the Covenant will see Jesus welcoming them with love and joy. Every adult that comes to The Church of the Covenant will see Jesus welcoming them as a CHILD of GOD as well.

So that sculpture will be the best church sign ever. It is a sign of our desire to welcome little children and that our church is a place where that happens. It is a sign of who we are and who we want to be in the future. It is a sign that adults enter into the presence of Jesus with JOY and child-like faith. For that is how we enter into the kingdom of heaven. It will be a sign of our mission statement: *"To know Christ and make Him known to the next generation."*

It is a SIGN on Beau Street. It is a SIGN of God's LOVE on Beau Street. It is a sign that Jesus welcomes us, whether as an adult or as a child, into His presence with love and joy. Maybe that's the SIGN from God you personally need TODAY??? Amen and Amen.

**By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**