

Sunday 10th of September 2023
Pentecost 15A - Thankful for the benefit of others

Read: Matthew 18:1-14

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' ²He called a child, whom he put among them, ³and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

⁶ 'If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷Woe to the world because of stumbling-blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling-block comes!

⁸ 'If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.

¹⁰ 'Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. ¹²What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

1. What do you think motivated the disciples to ask the question: "who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"?
2. Why do you think Jesus uses a child to show them what being "the greatest" means?
3. In what ways is a child humble?
4. In what ways does a child express pure faith or dependence on others? How can we express that same type of faith and dependence as adults?

5. A millstone was a very large stone weighing hundreds of pounds; it was used to grind grain into flour. Jesus used a graphic illustration containing a millstone. Why do you think Jesus uses such stark imagery?
6. Jesus uses the hand, foot, and eye as metaphors for things that cause you to sin. Do you think Jesus is being literal or metaphoric? How should we respond when we recognise our own sin?
7. The parable of the lost sheep is one of the most well known of the parables. In light of the preceding verses what does this parable say to us in how we should live our lives and how God sees us and others?

Prayer

O God,
you know us to be set in the midst
of so many and so great dangers
that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright:
grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers
and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord.