

# McCabe United Methodist Church

Prayer 101 (Part 2): Like Children

Psalm 70 \* Mark 10:13-16: January 25 & 26, 2014

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Let's begin this message the way we began last week by singing the chorus *Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying*. The words are printed in your bulletins.

**Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your Spirit in this place; Lord, listen to your children praying, send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

**“Lord, listen to your children praying.”** We are *CHILDREN* of God and God hears us when we pray.

Today, is the second message in a series we're calling *Prayer 101*. Last week, we talked about 'why' we pray. Hopefully, we discovered that one of the main reasons we pray is to grow and maintain our relationship with Jesus Christ. Through prayer, we grow closer to Jesus and closer to the persons we are meant to be.

Today, we'll look at praying like a child. In the Bible, there's a special place in the Kingdom of God for children. There's something about children that Jesus wants us to know about. In fact, there's something about children that Jesus wants us to be like.

In the book of John, the first chapter, there's a verse that tells us, **“But to all who receive him, who believe in his name, they will be given the power to become children of God.”**

We are the children of God if we believe.

In our passage from Mark, we're given a warning, **“Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”**

There's something about children, about being child-like, that Jesus wants us to know and be like.

One night a mom was saying bedtime prayers with her little boy. The little boy asked, **“Do we have to do this EVERY night?”**

And his mom replied, **“Yes, every night! Some people pray many times a day. Some people pray all day long and some people pray before meals and some pray the first thing in the morning.”**

The little boy replied, **“Usually, I have to go to the bathroom first.”**

Kids! You just have to love them. Maybe you heard about the two little girls who were talking to each other about their parents. One of them complained, **“First they teach you to talk, then they teach you to walk, and as soon as you learn how to do both, they tell you to ‘Sit down and be quiet’.”**

Yet, Jesus tells us, that unless we become child-like, we will not enter the kingdom of God. So, what parts of a child are you and I are expected to be like? What parts of a child are the parts Jesus wants us to copy? What parts of a child do we bring to Jesus in prayer?

First, I think Jesus wants us to *trust* like a child. A child goes up to just about anyone and trusts them. There’s a good reason why parents warn their children *‘don’t talk to strangers’*. There isn’t much difference between a parent and stranger in the eyes of a child. They trust people. They haven’t developed the fears and the attitudes and the defenses that we develop as we grow older.

Jesus wants us to *trust* him like a child. **“Trust me,”** Jesus tells us, **“I will help you. I will be with you. I will take care of you. I will lead you. Trust me.”**

A father dug wells for a living. He had a daughter named Mary. She was five. She meant the world to him. One day, Mary brought her father some lunch. She came to the well that he was digging and didn’t see him. She looked down the well and all she saw was darkness. **“Daddy,”** she yelled, **“are you down there?”**

**“Yes,”** he called back. **“I’m here. Just drop my lunch and I’ll catch it.”**

She dropped the lunch into the dark hole. **“Mary,”** the father said, **“I have enough to eat for two people. Why don’t you come down here and eat with me? It’s nice and cool.”**

**“I’m afraid,”** Mary said. **“I can’t see you.”**

**“Don’t be afraid,”** her father replied. **“I’ll catch you.”**

Mary jumped into the darkness and her father caught her. **“Mary,”** her father said, **“You put me to shame. How often has God called me to do something or go somewhere, but I was afraid and I didn’t jump? I didn’t trust God.”**

Trust, like a child.

Second, with a child, you get what you see. There’s no *pretending* with a child. He or she waddles up to us exactly as they are. Bubble-gum chewing, sticky fingers, messy diapers, tears and all, they come to us as they are.

This is the way Jesus wants us to come. Too often, we pretend to be people we’re not. We pretend we’re perfect or we don’t have any problems. We forget that Jesus sees us exactly as we are, warts and blemishes, scars and sins. Nothing is hidden from Jesus.

When we pray, we need to go to Jesus *as we are* and begin our prayers by saying something like this, **“Lord, here I am again. It’s been another hard week. I know I’ve let you down. I know I didn’t do what you wanted me to do and I did what I shouldn’t have done. I’m sorry. Help me to do better today.”**

*‘Just as I am’* and just as you are, we come to Jesus, warts and all.

Third, children have a simpler *faith* that many of us have lost long ago. We’ve been harden by the world and by the things that have happened to us. We put up these invisible walls around us and we hope these walls will protect from anymore pain or suffering. Sadly, we end up living within these walls not letting others in and not being able to let ourselves out.

Children have a simple faith. They see what we don't see. They hear things we don't hear. And they believe in things that we've stopped believing in long ago.

A woman was having a hard time in life. Things weren't going well for her. Her parents were getting older and more needy. Her marriage was dissolving. Her job was tedious and boring. She was depressed.

This woman would often escape her world by going to a certain beach where she knew she could be alone, without distractions and without problems.

One day, she went to the beach. The ocean was blue and beautiful. The sand was soft and welcoming. She just wanted to sit down for a while and have a good cry.

**"Hello,"** a little girl said to her. The woman just nodded her head. **"I'm building a sand castle. Do you want to help?"**

**"No,"** she replied. **"I'm just going to walk for a while."** Just then, a sandpiper flew by. A sandpiper is a little bird that lives on the shore. They're sometimes called snipes.

**"That's a joy,"** the little girl said.

**"What,"** the woman asked?

**"It's a joy. My mom says sandpipers bring us joy."**

The bird flew off. And the woman muttered to herself, **"good-bye joy. Hello pain."** She started to walk away.

**"What's your name,"** the little girl asked? **"My name is Wendy."**

**"Susan,"** she said. **"My name is Susan."** And she walked away.

**"Good-bye Susan,"** Wendy called out.

A couple of weeks passed. Susan was still depressed. She said to herself, **"I need a sandpiper. I need some joy."** She went to her spot on

the beach. She had forgotten about Wendy and she was surprised when she heard, **“Hello Susan. Do you want to play?”** It was Wendy.

**“No,”** Susan said. **“Where do you live,”** she asked the little girl. She pointed to some rental cottages that were nearby. Susan thought it was strange. This wasn't the tourist season and normally those cottages were empty. Again, Susan said good-bye and walked away.

Two weeks later, Susan made a return trip to the beach. She was feeling more depressed than ever before.

**“Hello, Susan,”** Wendy called out.

Susan looked around and saw Wendy's mother standing on the cottage porch. She felt like telling her to keep a better eye on her daughter. **“Look, Wendy, Susan said, “I want to be alone today.”**

**“Why,”** Wendy asked.

**“Because my mother died that's why and I want to be alone. OK?”**

**“Oh. Did it hurt?”**

**“Did what hurt,”** Susan half-shouted.

**“When she died,”** Wendy asked. **“Did it hurt?”**

**“Of course it hurt,”** Susan snapped and walked away.

Another month passed before Susan went back to the beach. Wendy wasn't there. She felt guilty and ashamed about the way she had treated Wendy the last time. She said to herself, **“I wonder where she is? I miss her.”**

She walked up to the cottage where Wendy lived and knocked on the door. Wendy's mother answered. **“Hello, my name is Susan. I missed seeing your daughter today. Is she here?”**

**“Come in, Susan,”** she said. **“Wendy talked about you a lot.”**

Susan sensed that something was wrong. **“Is she here? Is she all right?”**

**“Wendy died last week,”** the mother said. **“She had leukemia. She loved this beach and asked to come here and stay until . . . until it was over.”**

Susan sat down. Tears rushed down her face.

**“She left you something,”** the mother said. She handed Susan an envelope with **Susan** printed on the front. Inside was a drawing, in bright color crayon colors, of a sandpiper. Below the drawing were these words, **“A Sandpiper to bring you joy.”**

Children see things we don't see. They hear things we don't hear. They believe in things, many of us have stopped believing in long ago.

We come to Jesus like a child: Trusting him, as we are, and in faith.