

Like a Child

On Sunday we continued our new sermon series called “Jesus, Light of the World” by exploring Jesus’ exhortation that we become like children.

1. Warm-up question: Children are funny little creatures. What’s something funny, cute, or endearing that you’ve seen a child do?
2. In the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly and emphatically teaches that we must “change and become like children” if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven. On Sunday we studied one of those passages. Read Matthew 18:1-5.
 - a. Jeff said that the term “kingdom of heaven” has both a present and future component. If someone asked you to explain the term, what would you say?
 - b. Children are many things. They’re playful, imaginative, vulnerable, curious, etc. If Jesus had only said “become like a child” and nothing more, we would have no idea what he meant. Fortunately, in Matthew 18:4 Jesus identifies the primary characteristic of children he wants us to embrace, namely: humility.
 - ✓ The Greek word is *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO), which means “to make low, to have not status, to bring into any situation a humble condition.”
 - ✓ The Interpreters Bible sums it up by saying that Jesus is calling us “to accept a radically different understanding of our status.”

Have you ever known someone who embodied *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO)? Describe them.

- c. Why do you think Jesus said we can’t get into the kingdom of heaven without *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO)? Why is *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO) so critical?
3. We spent most of Sunday’s sermon exploring what *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO) looks like when applied to the circumstances of our everyday lives. **For starters, it affects how we approach learning and knowledge.** Children are notorious for being full of questions. They are keenly aware how much they don’t know and are thirsty to learn more. Jesus calls us to be like that.
 - a. A wise person once said, “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.” What do you think that means?
 - b. Jeff shared a cartoon depicting a religious teacher drawing an elaborate tree diagram showing all the Churches and Christian Movements throughout history. The teacher circled one small branch at the far edge of the diagram and said, “So this is where our movement came along and finally got the Bible right.” One of the students responded, “Jesus is so lucky to have us!” What point is the cartoon trying to make? Have you ever encountered this attitude in action?

- c. Is it wrong to believe that we know all the right spiritual answers? Why or why not?
 - d. In an episode of Sesame Street, Grover gets depressed after touring “the Museum of Everything,” but then joyfully discovers “the Museum of Everything Else.” Grover’s attitude illustrates the heart of a child – a thirst to know, coupled with a humble understanding that, no matter how much I learn, there will always be so much more to know. Once we think we have God and life all figured out, we stop growing, get stagnant, and fail to live fully into who God created us to be. Jesus challenges us to stay small; keep learning. Tell us about something that is happening in your life right now and what you think God might be trying to teach you through it.
4. **Becoming *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO) like a child also means realizing how dependent we are.** Kids realize that they’re not in control. They can’t survive on their own. So they have to do as they’re told or else. If you’re going to be happy as a kid, you’ve got to learn to accept what is and make the most of it, whatever comes your way, instead of resisting and resenting. The same is true for us as adults.
- a. Last week each of our Oasis Groups helped host four homeless families in our church building, including 8 children. Jeff told how the homeless children seemed oblivious to their dire circumstances. They played and laughed like they didn’t have a care in the world. Deepest thanks to your Group for participating. How did your participation impact you?
 - b. What Pastor Vivian is now facing is a powerful reminder that, even as adults, we are not in control. One day you feel as healthy as you can be; the next day the doctor tells you that you have silent cancer cells in your body. Thankfully, Vivian’s prognosis is good, but still it’s discombobulating. When in your life have you been powerfully reminded that you’re not in control? What’s the secret to thriving in times like that?
5. **Becoming *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO) like a child also means “giving up all pretensions of self-importance.”** (Source: Interpreters Bible Commentary). In our Gospel passage, Jesus illustrates this aspect of *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO) by saying, “Whoever welcomes a child in my name welcomes me.” Matthew 18:5. In Jesus’ culture, children were considered non-entities that should be tended by womenfolk. Powerful men like Jesus weren’t supposed to “waste” their time on children. Jesus completely rejects that notion. He says hanging out with those who have no status is the best. Just like children are oblivious to status, we should be too.
- a. Tell us about a time when you connected with someone considered to have “low status.” What brought you together? How did it affect you?
 - b. As adults, our natural tendency is to want to hang with “important people.” Practicing *tapeinoo* (top-aay-NO) takes conscious effort on our part. What are some practical ways we can get in the habit of doing what Jesus teaches here?