

Comments on Youth Sunday

Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 8:00 am

Matthew 18:1-5, 10

June 10, 2012

I.

Today is Youth Sunday at the 10:00 am service. That means I will not preach a sermon at that service, but rather the youth will take over with their own presentations. And because there will be no regular sermon then, I will be brief now.

And I'll begin by telling you what our kids are going to do. Gabriel and Lauralee Pellegrin, and Ethan Ziegler will be ushers and help as greeters, and do what ushers and greeters normally do.

We will have two teams of acolytes. Team One will be Allie Edwards, Reagan Edwards, and Caroline Tibbs, who have served as acolytes in the past. Team Two will be Kate Tibbs, Abby Rasberry, and Gracie Gebbia, who will be serving for the first time today.

The kids also are going to do all the readings. David Hector will offer the First Reading, Sydney Ruzicka will lead us in the Psalm, Evan Ruzicka will do the Second Reading, and Caroline Tibbs will read the Gospel.

Then, as part of the sermon time, Matthew Saucier will offer a short homily, followed by our St. Thomas Gospel Players who have prepared a clever skit. The performers here will be Gracie Gebbia, Abby Rasberry, Gabriel Pellegrin, Lauralee Pellegrin, Caroline Tibbs, Sienna Franceski, Kate Tibbs, and Ethan Ziegler.

After that, Matthew Saucier will ask us to say the Nicene Creed, and Rebecca Werner will lead us as we offer the Prayers of the People. Evan and Sydney Ruzicka will be the Oblationers, and will receive the Offerings.

II.

But even though I'm not going to preach, old habits die hard and so I will briefly touch upon today's Gospel reading. Jesus used a child as an example to help people understand what heaven will be like.

And this would have been a significant example at the time. Today we regard childhood as an important time when we teach our children and guide them in experiencing life. We try to show them that they are important parts of our families and have identities within society.

It was different in Jesus' time. Children had no status at all, and no role in society. They had to stay with their mothers until they could become useful. Children at most were treated as sources of free labor, and were not symbols of anything important. Yet Jesus identified with a child.

As adults we have grown up in the ways of the world. Worldly temptations are ever present. Children, however, are more likely to be seen as pure and innocent. They have not yet developed ulterior motives, hidden agendas, self-serving attitudes that sometimes characterize us as adults and lead us away from what our Lord wants us to be.

And Jesus' use of a child to describe entry into heaven also parallels his other teachings about being born in the spirit, which comes after baptism, and occurs when we experience a saving faith. It happens as we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

That's when we embark on a spiritual journey where our belief takes root, the Holy Spirit shows forth through us in our lives and, to use the well-known metaphor, we are born again not

physically, but spiritually. And as spiritual children we begin our growth in the Lord, the deepening of our faith, and our preparation for the kingdom of heaven that Jesus described today.

III.

So, let's go back to Youth Sunday. We look to our young people to carry on after us. And we want those who follow us to be as dedicated and committed to the faith as the disciples were so long ago.

That's why we have tried to make our Sunday School and youth ministry a priority here at St. Thomas. It's why encourage our parents to participate, and why we emphasize more and more youth activities.

I invite any of you who are free to do so to come back to our 10:00 am service. If you consider this 8:00 service as your normal Sunday worship, then you might find the 10:00 service to be a preview of things to come. And if you receive communion at 8:00 am you don't have to receive it at 10:00 am unless you have sinned between the two services.

And a few years from now our worship at St. Thomas might start looking more like the 10:00 service today than our regular 10:00 service. Even so, the basics will stay the same. The bread and the wine still will be consecrated. And as always we will recognize Christ's presence at the Holy Table.

But the words, and the feelings they impart, and the hope that is inherent in young people clearly will come through in our second service today.

I'm reminded of the story about a new priest who came to a parish, and met a man who said he had been a member of the parish for over fifty years. The Priest said, "I imagine you have seen a lot of changes over that time." The man said, " I certainly have, and I opposed every one of them."

IV.

I know that our attitudes are different. And I know that we always look for ways to reach out to our young people. And at times that might mean that our music is contemporary. The organ will give way to other instruments. And every prayer we say together might not be from the Book of Common Prayer. But God still will be praised and worshipped.

And so I urge us, as we participate in the traditions of our worship, to recognize that the younger generation looks at some things differently, as has been case throughout countless generations. And it is up to us to encourage and support them in their own creativity and development as we also welcome them into the worship that we hold so dear. *Amen.*