

PREPARING AT HOME

September 17-23, 2018

Focus reading: Mark 9:30–37 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=402730702>)

Other lectionary readings: Proverbs 31:10–31; Psalm 1; James 3:13—4:3, 7–8a

Theme: First in Caring

Last week we heard Jesus predict his own suffering to his disbelieving disciples. This week we hear Jesus for a second time predict his death to disciples who are unable or unwilling to understand that the Messiah for whom they had been waiting would suffer and die rather than lead a military overthrow of the oppressive Roman Empire. Even as Jesus tries to prepare his disciples for the suffering ahead, he catches them in an argument about which of them is the greatest! Stating that the greatest must be the “servant of all” (verse 35), Jesus takes a child in his arms and equates welcoming a child with welcoming God. In Jesus’ context, this was a radical statement! Unlike our own culture in which children are treasured, Children in Palestinian and Roman cultures were loved but viewed as a liability because of their weakness. Children were the most vulnerable of society and often the first victims of starvation, disease, or violence. Jesus teaches that those who would be great are those who embrace and welcome the most vulnerable of society. This is one of Jesus’ “upside down” teachings and may have been particularly encouraging to Mark’s audience, a Christian minority that suffered under the harsh rule of the Roman Empire. At the same time, it is a disturbing teaching for those who equate greatness with power, privilege, and military might. Jesus challenges us to find greatness in welcoming the most vulnerable.

WHO IS GREAT?

Who do you think is great? What makes them great? Who is honored by our society as being great? For what reasons? Who does Jesus say is great? Can you think of people who Jesus would call “great”? What makes them great?

CHILDREN WELCOME HERE!

How does our church welcome children? Draw pictures of the ways in which children are welcome at church. What else could our church family do to make children feel more welcome? How do we welcome people in wheelchairs? What else could we do to be more welcoming? Who might feel unwelcome? What can we do to “choose welcome” and change that?

IMAGINE

Imagine that Jesus takes you into his arms and holds you close. What would that feel like? What would you want to say to him?

PRAYER

Loving God,
You welcome us as your children.
May we welcome and serve others
so that all would know your love.
Amen.

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