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Title: Upside Down: Where the Children Are Blessed

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Text: [Mark 10:13-16](#)

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[Watch the service.](#)



We are beginning a new worship series today called Upside Down. Each of our worship texts in this series comes from the 10th chapter of the Gospel of Mark, and each of these scenes from Jesus' life come right before his entry into Jerusalem. Jesus is teaching his followers what following him will require. These are teachings about

what Discipleship looks like. He wants his followers to understand that the priorities and perspectives of the world are not always the perspectives and priorities of the kingdom of God. The kin-dom of God often works oppositely from the way the world works. Jesus is turning our priorities and our perspectives Upside Down

The other day I found myself thinking about the vacations I took as a child. Growing up in Atlanta, most summers we would make the six-hour drive south to Panama City Beach, Florida. We often stayed at the same hotel and would often go on vacation with another family. I remembered the feelings of excitement and anticipation as we got in the car, just ready for a week at the beach. The reason I started thinking about these vacations was that Mary Michael and I were trying to finalize our holiday travel plans in terms of time with family and with friends back in Atlanta.

When I was a child, I didn't have to worry about anything on the trip. I didn't have to worry about what time we would leave and what time we would arrive. I didn't have to worry about where we would stay or where we would eat. I did not have to put gas in the car or be aware of us going in the right direction. I didn't even have to pack my bag or load my bag in the car. I just got in the car and went along for the ride. I trusted my dad and my mom to take care of the rest.

Fast forward to last week, when we were making travel plans, I realized that in a way the roles were reversed. Now, along with Mary Michael, we must make a lot of travel plans. We must decide when to leave, who to stay with, or where to stay, where to eat, what's our budget for the trip. We must pay

attention if we are going in the right direction or if we need gas. We decide when and where to eat, and then we hear about it if someone is unhappy. No one packed my bags for the trip, and I am now responsible for loading all the bags into the car.

I thought back to when I traveled a good bit when I served with the Pension Fund of the Christian Church. I had to book my flights and my lodging, make sure I got to the airport on time, got through security, and made it to the right gate with time to spare for the required Starbucks stop. Upon arrival, I had to pick up my rental car, figure out where I was going, and make sure I arrived there on time. Travel is far more difficult as an adult than it is as a child.

As a child, you have complete trust in someone else. When I read the text that begins our series, it makes me think about travel as a child. When Jesus challenges you and me to receive the kin-dom of God like a child, Jesus is challenging you and me to radical trust in God along this journey that we call life.

"People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is too such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them." Mark 10:13-16 NRSV

Adults have a hard time with trust. We have a difficult time with the idea of radical trust in God. At some point in life, we don't like to depend on anyone, we want to do it ourselves.

Several years ago, we had to get a new dishwasher. I believed I could install this dishwasher myself and save a little money on the install fee. Well, let's just say as a handyman, I make a good pastor. My very handy neighbor came over. He had just installed a new dishwasher a week earlier in his own house. I could have invited him in and he is the type of person that would have helped me, installed this dishwasher in about 20 minutes. Instead, I wouldn't even let him the house. I was determined to do this himself and I didn't want him to know that I had no idea how to properly install the dishwasher. And so, two and a half hours later, I picked up my phone and called him. He said, "I was wondering when you would be calling me."

We don't like to depend on anyone, we want to do it ourselves. We hesitate and we struggle to place trust in anyone other than ourselves and some of us can barely extend trust to ourselves.

Jesus lived in a day and age when children had no status. In this passage, children not only represent themselves, but they also represent everyone who had no status in the world. The Roman world had a clear order of power and standing. There were people at the top and there were people at the bottom. Those at the top held all of the power. They would have expected Jesus to say, "the kingdom of God belongs to the powerful, the kingdom of God belongs to those who have always been ahead."

Jesus turns things upside down. Jesus tells the crowd to let the children come to him. Jesus tells his disciples, let the children come to me. He is serious, for he tells them that this is who the kingdom belongs to, if you want to live in a way that reflects the way God intends you to live, you will watch these children.

The children are representing all of those who have no claim to anything in the current world, those who are the most vulnerable, but who are the first to receive the kingdom of God. The children represent all of those who have radical trust in God and in the way that God works. Jesus is saying, God is different.

"What is God like? God brings people together. God desires that people who, having been once brought together, ought to stay together. God is the one who refuses to send these "little ones" away. Instead, God is the one who receives and embraces the little ones." -- Will Willimon

God is the one who receives and embraces. See, we learn that in this world there are limits. There are limits to everything. There is only so much to go around and so we do everything to protect what is ours. We hold on tightly to what we perceive is ours. We don't trust the world enough to let go of what we have. It's why in the Roman world, very few people had anything at all, very few people had status, and those who did have status, did anything to keep it. It's why so many, including children, had no status.

Jesus turns that upside down. The love of God has no limits. We can trust the love of God to have no limits. You can place your radical trust in the radical love of God.

In Jesus' world, these children are blessed because they trust in God and trust in others. They trust that in the kingdom of God all will be made well, all will be made whole.

"Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." Mark 10:15 NRSV

The children are blessed because the children get it. I've said before that my two favorite things that we do in church are baptism and child dedication. They both lift a person's radical trust in the way of God. In Baptism, new life in Christ. In a child dedication, that child and those parents are trusting in this congregation to help them raise their child. To demonstrate and to teach their child what life in Christ looks like.

Church, today we celebrate that in the kingdom of God, there is no entry requirement. There is nothing we can do to get in or even nothing we can do to be removed. Jesus has turned the world upside down.

Well, there is one thing...we must become like a child. Like a child in that we place our trust, place radical trust, in God to guide us through this life.

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