

February 24, 2016

*I Have Sinned: Self-Importance*

Mark 10:13-16

**Opening words:** One of our basic human spiritual needs is for forgiveness. It is one of the things that draw us to Christ. Jesus did not come into the world to be our role model. Jesus did not come into our world to be our teacher. Jesus did not come into our world to entertain us. Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins. Never forget, Jesus is our Savior. Colossians 1:13-14 says, *"He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* Lent is a time to confess our sins and repent. This evening I want to look at the sin of self-importance. Our Gospel lesson is Mark 10:13-16.

**Mark 10:13-16** <sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."<sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

-----  
This evening we are in the tenth chapter of Mark. It is important that you know that time is running out on Jesus's ministry. In the next chapter is Mark's version of Palm Sunday. In other words, Jesus's appointment with the cross was near. The pressure was building; there was no time to waste. Perhaps that explains the disciples' behavior. People were bringing their little children to Jesus for a blessing. It was the custom of the land for rabbis to bless little children. The best we can offer our children is Jesus. There was only one problem. Time was running out, and these little children were wasting valuable time. For this reason, the disciples try to dismiss the children. Jesus sees their attempts and reprimands the twelve. The question is, why? The answer to that question is hidden below the surface. Jesus knew what we know. Adults value their independence. Children are comfortable with their dependence. In the Kingdom of God, like children, everyone is dependent on God. What is it that children have that we have lost? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

This is a red letter year in my life. This is why: This is the first year in twenty-five years no one in my family is in school. Sarah started kindergarten in 1990; Anna finished her graduate program in August. I would like to say I miss those days, but I can't. Truthfully, I have enjoyed my girls at every age. I never missed any age once it was over; I never longed for a certain age before it began. I am enjoying them now, as adults.

The next person to go to school in my family will be my granddaughter, Pippa. The clock is ticking. She is growing fast. I don't talk about her a great deal for a single reason, protection. Having this job means you live in the spotlight; having this job means your family is going to live in the spotlight. I was always uncomfortable with my daughters in the spotlight; I am really uncomfortable having my granddaughter in the spotlight. Someday, I am going to retire. The most appealing thing about retirement to me is not living in the spotlight. This is the painful truth. It is not easy living in the spotlight; it is even harder growing up in the spotlight.

From the day Sarah and Vic announced their engagement, Kathryn talked about having an Eskimo baby. For those of you who do not know, my son-in-law Vic is 100% native Alaskan. Kathryn wanted an Eskimo grandbaby and now she has one. Pippa looks just like her father. Sarah's genes didn't have a chance! Pippa looks just like her father and that is fine. This is the rest of the equation; she acts like her father too—determined and strong-willed. Sarah was a compliant child; Pippa is a strong-willed child. Sarah and Vic have their hands full. It is much easier to be the grandfather of a strong-willed child than it is to be the parent of a strong-willed child.

As I wrote this message, I spent quite a bit of time thinking about Pippa. The reason is obvious. People brought little children to Jesus, and Pippa is a little child. The kingdom-like qualities that were in those children are in Pippa now. What is Pippa trying to teach us about the Kingdom of God? She'd better hurry, because she is growing fast. Soon she won't be a little child anymore. It isn't just her. It is all little children. What truths are all children trying to teach us about the Kingdom of God? I am sure there are many, but I only have time for three. If you are ready to begin, say, **"Amen!"** I will be brief.

### **Loving**

Did you know toymakers watch the divorce rate? When it rises, so do toy sales. According to the analyzers, four parents and eight grandparents tend to compete for children's affections, so they buy toys. You know the truth; love can't be bought. The first Kingdom-like quality is love; Pippa is loving. One of the things she loves to do is hug and kiss. One of the things she loves to receive is love. Is there anyone here who has too much love in their life? How much would you sacrifice for a loved one? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"** The first Kingdom-like quality we must cultivate in our lives is love. The second is forgiveness.

### **Forgiving**

Pippa has a playmate by the name of Elaine. She comes over to their home once or twice a week. It is good for both of them, because they are learning how to share. Every once in a while, I am told there is conflict. Sharing is a rare art in our world and must be learned. One of the great things about Pippa and Elaine is that the conflict passes quickly and the other is forgiven. They go on like nothing has happened. In the Kingdom of God, everyone is forgiven and everyone forgives. How long can you hold a grudge? How old is your oldest grudge? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

The first Kingdom-like quality is love. The second Kingdom-like quality is forgiveness. The third Kingdom-like quality is trust.

### **Trusting**

There is no doubt about it; Pippa's favorite person in this world is her mommy. She would love to be with her mommy 24/7. Kathryn goes over once or twice a week. Grandma is OK, but in the eyes of Pippa, she can't hold a candle to mommy. She loves her mommy and she trusts her mommy. In the Kingdom of God, we love God, but we also trust God. Let me ask you two questions. First, do you love God? Second, do you trust God? Perhaps, this is a better question: How far do you trust God? Pippa trusts her mommy completely. If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**" The first Kingdom-like quality is love. The second Kingdom-like quality is forgiveness. The third Kingdom-like quality is trust.

Andrew Gillies wrote a poem called *Two Poems*. This is the poem. It is the perfect ending to this evening's message.

Last night my little boy confessed to me  
Some childish wrong;  
And kneeling at my knee,  
He prayed with tears --  
"Dear God, make me a man  
Like Daddy -- wise and strong;  
I know you can."  
Then while he slept  
I knelt beside his bed,  
Confessed my sins,  
And prayed with low-bowed head.  
"O God, make me a child  
Like my child here --  
Pure, guileless,  
Trusting Thee with faith sincere."

And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"