

Text Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29; Psalm 19:7-14; James 5:13-20; Mark 9:35-50
Theme Kid Stuff
Subject Collected Teachings of Jesus
Occasion 17th after Pentecost – October 1, 2006 –Peace – Pella (Guest Sunday; Baptism of Colin Kerndt)

These days I've been aware of my age

Aches and pains, an old injury haunting me again, being a grandfather

Sometimes I think of my home-going but most I look with wonder at the miracle of life around me

Colin being baptized today

Wasn't it just yesterday that his mother, Alli, took her first communion here in this room

So I've been thinking about children

The Gospel reading before us is a collection of Jesus' teachings that Mark has put together for us.

It's a refreshing account

Jesus sitting down with his disciples to teach them – just the 12,

But near enough is a child who helps Jesus make his 2nd point

"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." (Mk 9:37)

A comfortable setting – child-friendly

It occurred to me that Jesus is teaching Kid Stuff

I mean this with full respect for children

Kid Stuff is important

What we learn as children is important for life

In 1986 Robert Fulghum published a little book that lots of people read or heard about

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten – maybe you remember

When he was younger, he wrote his *Credo* every year – these were usually long and complex

Then he decided to limit himself to one page

His list hints at where I'm headed this morning with the theme: Kid Stuff

Fulghum wrote:

- Share everything
- Play fair
- Don't hit people
- Put things back where you found them
- Clean up your own mess
- Don't take things that aren't yours

- Say your sorry when you hurt somebody
- Wash your hands before you eat
- Flush
- Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you
- Live a balanced life – learn some and think some; and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some
- Take a nap every afternoon
- When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together
- Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the styrofoam cup: the roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that
- Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the styrofoam cup – they all die. So do we.

These are Kid Stuff – innocent and naïve

And they lead to adult stuff

Adults in this room could talk about each of Fulghum's points for a long time

We would offer stories and illustrations of why we do some and why we don't do others - Kid Stuff

Our Gospel reading provides us the following collection of some of what Jesus taught:

Whoever wants to be first must be last

Whoever welcomes (a) child in my name welcomes me

Whoever welcomes me welcomes ... the one who sent me

Whoever is not against us is for us

(Don't put) a stumbling block before believers and especially not yourself

Have salt in yourselves

Be at peace with one another

Mark reported these teachings of Jesus to help the first members of congregations

They are Kid Stuff

Young Christian congregations needing some instruction about how to live

This Kid Stuff is the living Word of God among us

In the spirit of Martin Luther and Dominee Hendrich Scholte I could hold forth for sometime on each of these – but I won't

Trust me

The teaching of Jesus that **“Whoever wants to be first must be last”** is an invitation to follow him

Jesus taught that he would go the way of the cross

Paul told the Philippians that Jesus

humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name (Phil. 2:8-9)

It is why Christian congregations do servant ministries

It is why our seminaries train servant leaders

And now businesses are training employees to be servant leaders

This is still Kid Stuff

Being a member of the group in a way that helps the group

And what will be a sign of those who follow Jesus?

Jesus taught **Whoever welcomes (a) child in my name welcomes me; whoever welcomes me welcomes ... the one who sent me**

This is evangelism – living the good news of Jesus as soon as we meet someone

People meet Jesus when they meet a Christian

We are ones like Colin, sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever

an invisible sign but evident in all that we say & do

Children have this wonderful way of meeting people and then immediately name them as their friend

I remember lengthy discussions at seminary about how pastors are *not* friends of their parishioners – they are pastors and the boundary should not be confused

It's a word game – I've played this word game but never with positive results

Parents try to teach children the differences between friend, neighbor, acquaintance, and classmate – the distinction is necessary at some point

And yet the welcoming, innocent hospitality of a child is so filled with hope for the future

The children are, after all, the future

What joy it would be if everyone is our friend

Must we reserve this dream for heaven?

This teaching of welcome by Jesus is instructive for congregations

Everyone is welcome who approaches a Christian fellowship

Susan Mendenhall was a professional working among us last year

She encouraged us to be more welcoming:

A more obvious entrance and a more complete worship folder were two of her suggestions

Even better than good signs; having a person help us is the best hospitality

To show the way in; to guide the way through

That's Kid Stuff – isn't it?

When Jesus taught **Whoever is not against us is for us**

He was teaching the disciples about how they should have responded to a guy that was casting out demons in Jesus' name but wasn't one of them: wasn't 1 of the 12

This is a hint of what would come

Back then – more than one congregation in a town

Today – different denominations and different ways of being the body of Christ in the world

Last Sunday night some of us were with the people of First Reformed Church during their celebration of 150 years of ministry

They are not Lutheran but they are Christian

What they emphasize is different than Lutheran

But what they put in bold type: **providence, covenant, predestination, elders** exists on Lutheran pages too

And Lutherans put in bold type: **grace, sacraments & liturgy, justification**

These exist on the Reformed pages too

The way any Christian talks about God will always be incomplete

We can't possibly do the whole mission of the Gospel in Pella alone

With the congregations of Pella we easily say,

"We'll take all the help we can get."

This is Kid Stuff – isn't it?

Jesus also taught

(Don't put) a stumbling block before believers and especially not yourself

I've paraphrased this stumbling block material and brought it together

It's the section about it being better **if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea** and about cutting off body parts that cause use to stumble

This hyperbole – overstatement

A simple example from scripture will make the point

When Jesus was being taken prisoner, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of a servant named Malchus that was with the captors.

Jesus healed the fellow and admonished Peter

But Peter didn't cut off his hand

The simple truth:

As a witness: don't make following Jesus hard for people, especially for new ones

And in your life of faith: follow the way of Jesus so you don't trip; don't stumble

That's Kid Stuff

In Rachel Simon's book *Riding the Bus with My Sister*.

She tells of the year she lived with her sister Beth, "Cool Beth"

A scene from the book is so very fitting for this Guest Sunday at Peace Lutheran Church

Rachel introduces us to Beth in the first paragraph

“Wake up,” my sister Beth says. “We won’t make the first bus.”

At 6 a.m. ... she’s already dressed: grape-juice colored T-shirt and pistachio shorts, with a purple Winnie-the-Pooh backpack slung over her shoulder. I struggle awake and into my clothes: ... Beth and I, both in our late 30s, were born 11 months apart, but we are different in more than age. She owns a wardrobe of blazingly bright colors and can leap out of bed before dawn. She is also a woman with mental retardation.

Rachel tells us Beth has ingenuity – an uncommon trait for people who live on the periphery of society’s vision

When Beth realized she was lonely and couldn’t tolerate anymore TV re-runs, she decided to ride buses. Not just ride them the way most of us do, and which her aides had trained her to do a few years before. She wasn’t interested in something ordinary as getting from one location to another. ... in 1993 she started riding buses her way. She had a monthly bus pass that allowed her to loop through the city from dawn to dusk; riding a dozen buses a day, some for 5 minutes, others for hours, befriending drivers and passengers ... She staked out friendships all over the city, weaving her own traveling community

Bathrooms are a bit of problem for Beth – there’s only five minutes from one bus to the next but *where* can also be a problem. After 6 years of riding she knows every public restroom in the town

Once Rachel and Beth were hurrying to find a bathroom – they raced past a food franchise and Rachel asked, *“What about here?”*

Beth explained, “They let me for a while but then one day the manager came up to me and she said, ‘You can’t come in here anymore.’”

Rachel remembered this was a place where Beth said she bought coffee for the bus drivers and wondered why she didn’t protest since she was a frequent customer.

Beth explained, “I told her, but she still said I couldn’t come in. If they don’t want me there, I don’t want to go there.”

That’s just plain and simple: it’s Kid Stuff

Jesus wants us to **have salt in (ourselves)** – to salt the world with the saving Gospel

To make a difference

The difference starts with welcome and hospitality

We’ll need to continue to talk about when and how

While we’re talking about it and doing it,

He teaches, **Be at peace with one another**

Of course: *Together We Grow Peace*

So very simple – surely it’s Kid Stuff