

“What Kids Know”

1st Pres San Bernardino

John 1:9-14
Rev. Dr. Sandra R. Tice

12/14/08 3rd Advent

There are a variety of gifts, scripture says, but it is the same Spirit who gives them. I believe that all of us, **regardless of our age and stage**, are given gifts that we are meant to use for the common good, to build up the Body of Christ and to bless the world God loves.

That includes children. Not later, when they grow up. Not a few years down the road when they have learned (Or, failed to learn?!) to be grownups- but right now.

Because our kids are about to bring the message of the Christmas story to us, I want to remind you that they are uniquely equipped to do so. There are things kids know that the rest of us need to reclaim.

First, they know that **if you are going to do something, you might as well do it with your Whole Self, body and soul**. And so, when a child runs, they run pell-mell, will-nilly, as fast as their legs will carry them, utterly committed to the task at hand.

Likewise if they grieve or weep, they do it with their whole being- they shake with sobs and they shed buckets of tears and they fling themselves into the arms of those who love them. They let out all their sorrow, without apologizing for it.

And so it is with faith: Healthy children trust naturally, with their whole hearts, and they EMBODY that trust. They leap off of large objects, yelling ‘catch me!’ (sometimes whether we are ready or not!)

The Incarnation invites us to love and to trust and to live this way: with our whole selves, body and soul. To not worry if we look foolish, to not be self-conscious or distracted. To love in a way that changes us and changes the world in which we dwell. Kids have not forgotten how to commit to the task at hand or to trust in that way.

Secondly, **they remind us of our belovedness**. Each time we baptize a child, and I walk them down the aisle as we sing to them, I see that you know this: I see the tears in your eyes and the tenderness on your faces. The way we spontaneously love the babies in our lives is a reminder that we are made for love and that God loves us enough to entrust these little ones into our care. Indeed, God loves us with more love than that fierce upwelling in our hearts when we hold them- the love in us is only a shadow of the love God has for each of us.

Once upon a time, I had a little friend at a church I served- a beautiful, funny, *smart* little boy about 5 years old. This was about 15 years ago, and I did not yet have a child of my own, but I was responsible for the children’s ministry at that church. I said to him one day,

“Sam, I am crazy about you. You are a GREAT kid!”

He looked down at his shoes for a second, then up at me kind of sideways.

“Yeah.” He said shyly, “I know.”

This is why God came among us: that all of us might know what healthy children have not yet forgotten- **we are the beloved of God**. God loves us, and there is no part of our life: not childhood, not suffering, not wandering- where God is not present and working for our good.

We have a pageant every year. We do not do this simply because kids in costumes are cute (though Lord knows, they ARE cute!) We do this because it is fitting. **Kids know some things adults need to be reminded of, things crucial to Christmas.**

They embody the Christmas story- which was how it was done that First Christmas. And they do it with a bit of chaos and confusion, and at times we hold our breath for several moments, hoping it will all work out- which is how it was done that First Christmas.

And they remind us of Whole-Hearted Commitment, and of Belovedness- which is what the story is about, after all: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth”.

There are a variety of gifts. Listen with fresh eyes and ears to this story of Grace, as the children of this congregation share their gifts with the rest of us.