

## Week 3

### Who is my Neighbour?

#### Commentary

Time has always been a precious resource. How we use time reveals something about what we consider to be important. In this passage the disciples understanding of what's important appears to differ from that of Jesus. Giving attention to babies and children might on the surface appear to bring no immediate benefit to the mission of Jesus, or so the disciples thought. But for Jesus, recognising these young people and even formally inviting them to come close reveals a quality that the disciples have failed to notice.

That said, the primary focus of this passage is not so much children but rather the reaffirmation of v14; humility and lowliness usher us into the Kingdom. But what's interesting for the reader, is that in the midst of the important business of proclaiming the Kingdom, Jesus has time for the children, welcomes them, and even allows them to assist him in explaining the gospel to the gathered crowd.

#### Bible Passage—Luke 18:15-17

<sup>15</sup>People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. <sup>16</sup>But Jesus called for them and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. <sup>17</sup>Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.'

#### Questions

- What is it about being a child that appears so attractive to Jesus in relationship to embracing faith?
- Consider together what it 'feels like' to be a child in your church? To what extent do we limit the nature of our neighbourliness to people of our own generation?
- Read the two accompanying stories and reflect together on what concerns you and might be an appropriate Christian response? <http://www.birmingham.anglican.org/upload/pdf/week3supplement.pdf>
- To what extent do we limit the nature of our neighbourliness to people of our own generation?
- Have you had experience of rejection as a child, or as an adult observed your own child or the children of others being excluded? Can you share your experience with the group?

## Song

1. He knew the greatness of the small  
who spied two pennies in the plate,  
and felt the trust young hands relate  
and blessed them all:  
He said what mattered was not large  
when in God's charge.

2. He knew the beauty in the small  
who saw the sparrow in the sky,  
and crushed the corn which seemed to die  
when left to fall:  
He sensed a wonder in each seed  
which God decreed.

3. He knew the weakness of the small  
who dandled babies on his knee,  
and knelt with those who couldn't see  
but dared to call:  
He told the frail they would be strong;  
He stirred their song.

4. And so the kingdom comes, he said,  
in hidden ferment of the yeast,  
in vagrants summoned to a feast,  
in broken bread:  
what's undervalued in its place  
is charged with grace.

5. When we defer to sight or size,  
believing big is always best  
and falling for the Tempter's test,  
God open our eyes  
to see how Christ, the Lord of all,  
smiles from the small.

John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (born 1958)

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## Prayer

God with us,  
you did not put us in the world alone  
you gave us people to live beside  
to keep us company  
to share skills and resources  
to stop us from getting board.

God beside us,  
sometimes we don't like our neighbours  
we can't believe you really meant them  
when you said, 'love your neighbours,'  
did you God?  
not the nosey or noisy ones,  
not the messy ones,  
not the ones whose children don't behave  
whose dress or manners we don't like?

If you really do mean them God  
we're going to need your help.  
help us not to be too quick to judge.  
Help us to holdout a hand of friendship  
help us to remember that loving our neighbour  
Is not what we feel, but what we do. Amen.

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