

Something Bigger Than Myself

27th Week of Ordinary Time – Mark 10:2-16

I remember as a child climbing the fence into the neighbor's 40-acre timber. The neighborhood kids and I (there were 4 of us) played and explored that world for unending hours. A pond, a creek and a pine forest made for an idyllic childhood. What I remember most from those days was that I was very aware of something bigger than myself.

I was raised to understand that what was bigger than myself was God. The created world was not God, but I was keenly aware that God was the author who had created and ordered the world that I loved and enjoyed.

Whether searching for morel mushrooms in the spring or pulling so many tadpoles out of the pond that our mothers ordered us to take the bucket back and return the "tads" to their watery home, life was grand. Exploring a frozen creek or building a fort were all activities that laid the groundwork for my relationship with the Divine. I didn't have to understand it. It came to rest within me called forth by the beauty of nature and the understanding that Jesus (God) was ever present to me.

I spent hours sitting in the timber just thinking and wondering how this could all be so beautiful. It was a time of innocence and of wonder. It was a time of holy contemplation, a time when I could touch and feel the rare gifts of sun, wind and the pine scent that filled the air. I felt very much as one with the earth. Mostly, I felt as one with God.

Then came the process of growing up. Over the many years to adulthood, living this life has taken its toll on me. My innocence was shattered by my own and others' sins. Life was not fair. In fact, life was cruel, harsh, and at times, unbearable. And then there is the joy. Bill, our three kids, and our five grandkids provided the same joy of childhood calling me back to the beauty and the depth of life.

In today's gospel, I believe Jesus is naming this truth as he responds to the Pharisees and his disciples when he explains that God is the one who is bigger than our own pettiness, our needs, all our strict adherence to rules and our own over-the-top egos. Life and all our relationships belong to this thing greater than us. That greatness is God.

Jesus puts it quite simply. **"Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it."** It is the children, the poor, the refugee, the broken, the grieving, the homeless and the oppressed, who stand before God with nothing. Jesus is calling us to see this in our own lives. He is calling us to embrace a child-like view of the world and the fact that we are not in charge. Nothing of this world truly belongs to us. It is all on loan. Our lives, our bank accounts and all the stuff we think we own belong to, and only to, God.

As I reflect on those days of childhood, I see them as pure gift. That was a time where my connection to the earth and, especially to God, was sealed in a deeply conscious way. Jesus calls me this week to stand before him with the same vulnerability and openness that I had as a child, seeing before me something far greater and something far bigger than myself. Jesus says this is the only way to heaven.

Blessings!
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