

Advent Devotional – December 14, 2018

Yesterday was my birthday. As a gift to myself, I decided to relax and recycle one of last year's devotionals for today. Reading this one again was a wonderful birthday gift for me. I hope this brings you joy today.

One of the most fun things I get to do as Pastor is leading Children's Time in worship. I never know what the children are going to say. They always make me laugh. They always give hugs. Everyone wants to sit by me. Someone usually brings me a picture they've colored. They, like me, have trouble sitting still. And there's candy involved. What's not to love?

Even preparing the message is fun. I just think: "Keep it simple. Keep it short. Try to say something funny. And use an object to keep their attention." Come to think of it, that's probably the way I should prepare to teach adults, too. Most people remember the children's sermon better anyway.

In a previous Bible study group to which I belonged ("Dangerous Women" at First UMC Temple), one of the ladies brought a book entitled God's Story: The Bible Told as One Story by Karyn Henley to our meeting one evening. The book tells the story of the Bible chronologically, merges repetitive stories and, best of all, is written at a second grade level. Everyone wanted one! So she got a book for each of us (not an easy task as it is out of print).

Why would a group of highly educated women want a book written for second graders? Why do people remember the children's sermon better? Why would a pastor relish so much the chance to sit on the floor and teach wiggly children? Probably, because childlike faith is the best kind of faith. That's what Jesus said. When the disciples asked who was the greatest in God's kingdom, Jesus brought a child over to sit with them and told them they must become like that child to enter the kingdom of heaven. And another time when the disciples tried to keep some children away from Jesus, he said, "Allow the children to come to me...because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children" (Matt 18:1-5, 19:13-14).

Maybe that's why Jesus came as a baby! He could've come in a more powerful way, but maybe he knew that we would be more likely to believe and follow if he came as an innocent child.

Childlike faith is heavenly faith. So today, be childlike. Take time to play. Give someone a spontaneous hug. Color a picture and then give it away. Or do what the children do every Sunday in our church – share a Tootsie Roll with someone and tell them God loves them. Then eat one and remember that God loves you, too!

Prayer (which our children say every Sunday): Dear God, Thank you for loving me and always being with me. Now God, please help me to share your love with others. Amen.

May your day be filled with childlike joy and laughter.

Pastor Jannette