**Family Service Talk 22nd March 2020**

Luke 18:15-17

This is such a wonderful passage and especially today when we are thinking about and giving thanks for our mothers or mother figures.

Luke, who wrote the book in the Bible that this passage is taken from, was reminding his readers what Jesus said about being part of God’s kingdom… that sometimes it is the least likely people who Jesus welcomes into his kingdom.

At first glance the passage is all about children and babies which is perfect for a Family Service when we have lots of children here! And the wonderful news is that in the story, Jesus is calling the children then to come to him ….and he is calling you now to come to him today.

In the story, it tells us that people (probably mothers but also other relatives maybe), were bringing their babies to Jesus for him to touch them. There was, and still is, a Jewish custom that mothers would take their children to the Rabbi, or teacher of the law, for a blessing so this was not an unusual thing to do as the Jews at this time thought of Jesus as a pretty exceptional Rabbi.

Now maybe the disciples were anxious that Jesus was overworking and wanted to protect him from mere children or perhaps they had one eye on the clock and knew it was nearly lunch time or maybe they had simply got out of bed on the wrong side but, whatever the reason, they tried to stop the children and mothers approaching Jesus.

Jesus’ response was immediate – he called the children to him. What a wonderful moment – can we imagine it …. to the mothers at the time, they must have felt relief that this amazing Rabbi that they had heard all about was going to bless their child. For us today it is even more amazing, Jesus – the creator God who came to earth to die and rise again for each one of us – calls his children still today! WOW!

And he says to the friends that were with him – don’t hinder them, don’t get in their way because they are not only welcome in God’s Kingdom but actually it belongs to them and those like them – *(pointing to the adults)* you and you and you and ….!

But what is really exciting for those of us who are perhaps way beyond the stage of childhood, is that Jesus says that we too can enter God’s kingdom if we receive it like a little child. Great news but what exactly does Jesus mean by that?

What do we think of when we think of little children or babies? ….

* Dependant
* Trusting
* Simple needs
* Loving
* As well as…. messy / wakeful / noisy / demanding

So, Jesus is calling each one of us to come to him and saying … ‘depend on me’ … ‘trust me’ … ‘simply love and be loved by me’ … and you will be part of God’s kingdom now and for eternity.

I read a wonderful prayer the other day …

Jesus, please help me to come to you as a child, full of unbridled faith … safe, known and loved by you. Amen

Now you might be forgiven for wondering what all this has to do with Mothering Sunday and mothers, we’ve barely mentioned them really.

Let’s ask the same question about mothers or mother figures – what do we think of when we think of mothers; what do they do; what sort of people are they?

(If sadly your experience of a mother is not a good one, then think about the person who was a loving mother figure to you – maybe a father or a grandparent)

* Washing
* Ironing
* Loving
* Cooking
* Worrying
* Working

A huge array of jobs and attributes – but none of them seem to have anything to do with this passage.

In fact, the mother’s role is crucial to the central point of Jesus’ teaching because someone brought the little ones to Jesus. It would most likely be a mother ... and they have brought the child in order that Jesus can bless them.

That surely is the most important thing that a mother can do for their child – whatever their age or stage of life. In fact, for each one of us, if there is a child in our life, we could be the person who introduces them to Jesus. It will be the most important thing you can do for that child.

But how, as a mother, can we do this? We can

* Pray with them and for them – and tell them we are praying!
* Show them by how we live what being with Jesus looks like
* Teach them how to respond to Jesus in faith and love
* Read the Bible with them and to them
* Go with them to church or church group

Each of these will help a child to come to know more about Jesus

And that must surely be the best gift of all.

I heard about a little girl aged not quite 3 the other day who is taken to church by her parents and who knows about Jesus. She has a dvd about Jesus which she loves watching. When she went to nursery the other day, she told her key worker all about the dvd and wanted to show her the stories in the Children’s Bible on the bookshelf. The key worker told the child’s Mummy about this at pick-up time and wanted to know which church they went to and how she could know more!! This little girl already had changed someone’s life because of her simple acceptance of Jesus.

How much we can learn from this – may God help us to do so. Amen