

May 19, 2019 – Celebrating Sunday School & Children’s Communion
Pastor Erin Bouman, Irving Park Lutheran Church
John 13-31-35

What’s Important

Last Sunday for the Children’s Sermon I read a book to the children. On this Sunday that we celebrate children, for this sermon (really it’s more of a sermonette) I’m going to read a book to you. It’s a book that one of the children here wrote, and gave to me, about two months ago. This book is called “Church is Important A Lot” “In-portant” ... this original manuscript includes several idiosyncratic and endearing spellings, and also some intriguing page turns...

“Church is important a lot, because we” ... scribbled out word and then... “lern” l-e-r-n. “because we learn about God and we have a pastor.” I was quite touched that one of the things that makes church important a lot is that we have a pastor. Or, if you follow the author’s spelling, a Paste-er. I was about to pat myself on the back, “good job Paster,” but that’s not the end of the author’s thought; when you turn the page you realize the sentence continues, “we have a pastor to teach us about God.” The great Protestant systematic theology writer Karl Barth also said that, in addition to this young theologian. Barth said the point of a pastor is that they point to God. Good reminder of that, here: “we have a pastor to teach us about God and God ... is important.” Hard to be more on point than that, “and God is important ... and we get bread and wine and juice” I love how it goes from what God is, to what God gives—that’s right on point, too: how important God is, and what does God do with that? Gives us grace—tangibly, mystically; in bread and wine and juice, God gives grace in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

We also have an emphasis on that this Sunday. Nine children who’ve spent the last couple Saturdays learning more about the Lord’s Supper have a special invitation to it today. And they’ll be inviting us to communion, too, musically. Stay tuned... “God is important and we get bread and wine and juice... but the wine is for, the juice is for the kids.” I love how careful the writer is there: “but the wine is for, the juice is for the kids ... and there is everyone here.” That’s Communion, too: “and there is everyone here.” That’s what we learn in the communion classes: everyone is welcome, there’s a place for each one of these children, and everyone, here. God’s sets a place at the table for everyone.

The book continues on a more personal note, “I’m glad that we have ... church... and all of the adults listen.” I must admit that I paused there, at the end of this page, I paused. I was not sure if that was a completely true statement: “and all of the adults listen”... Instead of doubting, I should have turned the page. That’s so often true of adults, isn’t it? Instead of doubting, we ought to turn the page. The young author ends that sentence, “all of the adults listen ... to me.” This is what this child experiences here, a place where adults listen to them.

The book concludes, then, rather matter of factly, with one last remark, “We have been focusing about water.” This child’s Sunday School teacher will be gratified to hear the Lenten project made its point. “We have been focusing about water.” Water, that physical sign of that other sacrament, Baptism, for which we gave thanks at the beginning of worship today, we give thanks for that fountain of grace, by which we are all made children of God.

We’re going to sing about that, now. Note that the song we’re singing next is from the blue hymnal, and note that, as written we will sing the refrain twice each time, and note the lyrics, too. We couldn’t resist yet one more connection to the special dessert we’re having at lunch. Please join us for that. There’s a place for you there, and here, too.