

Grace Lutheran-State College, PA, September 23, 2018

[Pastor Ron Gluskamp]

Mark 9:30-37

³⁰[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” ³²But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” ³⁴But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior.

I want to do a call and response with you- I'll say the first part of a song, a song you know very well, and you'll speak the lines that come next- “Jesus loves me this I know, FOR- the Bible tells me so.”

Jesus said, ***“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”***

It is an honor and privilege to be here this morning with you. I bring you greetings from Bishop Elizabeth Eaton who is also in this great state of Pennsylvania- in Philadelphia yesterday to install The Rev Patricia Davenport as Bishop of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Bishop Davenport is the first African American Women to be elected as a Bishop.

Today as always we give thanks- Brother Steindal Rast says, “the root of joy is gratefulness. It is not joy that makes us grateful, it is gratitude that makes us joyful.” So, let's just pause right there and I ask you to think about something, someone, situation you are grateful for. I would think your responses, are like, family, health, recovery, children, church, salvation, some might be thankful for the amazing win the Nittany Lions had on Friday night- but, most of all- deep down in our hearts I know we are thankful for love and grace of Jesus- who makes all things new.

I am thankful that you respond to that in such amazing ways. First, thank you for your mission support to the Allegheny Synod- almost 90,000 dollars! Thank you for sending 14 youth to the ELCA Youth Gathering. Thank you for supporting Global Mission, for ELCA World Hunger, for being involved in the Crop walk, the Food Bank, Campus Ministry, WELCA and so much more. You know- you show- that together you can do more. You are a congregation that GATHERS< FEEDS and SENDS.

I give thanks for your pastor- and I'm sure you do as well. I really like what he wrote in GRACE-NOTES- three priorities right now, (1) to be debt free, (2) establish the best youth and family ministry (3) call associate pastor. Just want to highlight-the last congregation I served, when I went there was 5 million in debt- our mortgage if you will, house payment was about 380,000 per year, are just a little more that 1000 per day. We were able to retire that debt and re-allocated those dollars toward outreach and ministry. Goes back to that idea of gratitude- and joy.

Now the disciples are fighting among themselves about who is going to get cabinet positions in the kingdom of God. Who is the most important. And Jesus has been talking and walking with them for years- reminding them that the if you want to be the greatest, you have to be the least- in another place in the gospel he reminds them and us- that weepers are keepers, keepers are weepers- Jesus as you know is always turning the tables- we pray, come lord Jesus be our guest, guest becomes host, host becomes the very feast of victory. In Jesus world, children were not all that valued. I suppose they were liabilities until they could contribute. So, when Jesus highlights that children are to be welcomed and honored and treated with respect- it was controversial. And it is still that way today. I suppose Jesus focus on them – was because of their high level of trust and joy. NFS Grundtvig wrote

Cradling Children in His Arm

Cradling children in his arm,
Jesus gave his blessing.
To our babes a welcome warm
he is yet addressing.
Take them, Lord, give life anew
in the living waters!
Keep them always near to you
as your sons and daughters!

I want to congratulate and affirm you intention to highlight youth and family ministry. For Jesus said “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” When you think about it, faith formation is what it's all about-so important. And in order to do that- calls for adults to be AAA, authentic, affirming and available, it calls for you as a congregation to have devotions, acts of service, rituals and traditions caring conversations- milestone ministry so very important.

Now, I know that I've focused on the ministry that you are doing- and I want to acknowledge and affirm that you letter your lights shine is a response to God's saving love. As director of the ELCA Campaign- congregations, hunger, global church and leadership- all happening because God is calling us to realize the holy in the present.

Amen