



“This is the Story...”

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Week 40: Like a Little Child Would

Matthew 19: 13-15, Mark 10:13-16

Intro Video: https://youtu.be/FMn-l7jHn_0

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. All of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family to be a blessing to the whole earth. Like the humans before them, the generations of this family often missed the mark, but God was faithful.

When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God's provision, living out God's commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God brought the people into the promised land. There they continued to miss the mark, and God sent judges to guide them.

God raised up prophets, but the people demanded a king. Kings continued to miss the mark, and the kingdom divided into the north and south. God stuck with the people through leaders and prophets, and continued to call the people back to God, even as first the northern, and then the southern kingdom fell to invading powers. Some of the people were sent into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the kingdom. Through prophets and everyday people, God continued to stick with the scattered people and to reveal that God is so much bigger than they imagined. The people were finally able to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.

As we begin the story of the New Testament, Rome is the power in charge and the people of God are waiting for a Messiah. This Messiah is announced, first with a surprising genealogy, then through an angel to Mary. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, and there, Jesus was born, proclaimed by angels, visited by shepherds, blessed by Simeon and Anna, and sought by magi. When Jesus's life was in danger, his parents fled with him to Egypt, where they remained as refugees until it was safe for them to return and settle in Nazareth. As a child in Nazareth, Jesus grew up in the wisdom of God. His cousin John went before him, preparing the way, and when Jesus was ready to begin his ministry, he came to John to be baptized and was proclaimed by God. Jesus called a community of people to follow him.

Then Jesus began to teach and heal and show people God's way of love. He preached what we call the “sermon on the mount,” a fulfillment of the scriptures. Jesus walked on water and the disciples recognized him as the Son of God. Jesus miraculously fed people.

- **Key verses:** Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:15

Tell the story: People brought their children to Jesus, and Jesus welcomed them. Jesus said that the kingdom of God belongs to children.

- Read Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16
- Read page 238 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Notice who the grumblers are in this story. Why do you think they're so grouchy about people bringing children to Jesus?
 - Picture this scene. Notice the tenderness of the language about Jesus' actions with the children.
- **Background information:**
 - The Jews of the Second Temple Period deeply valued children. This passage is an illustration of that. People brought children to be blessed by Jesus.
 - Every time the people of God try to restrict the definition of who belongs, God says, "Nope!" This is one more example in a long line of stories of this broadening of the understanding of the people of God.
 - The children were there. Of course the children were there. Where the parents went the children went. Babysitters weren't a thing. This little story brings up something that was there all along. Through this whole big story, the children are present. As you picture each part of the story, chances are children are there. Children belong in each part of the story.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - Read what comes before and after this story (it's similar in each of these gospel accounts). Why do you think the blessing of the children is right here in the middle of conversations about divorce and a rich man being told he must give up everything to inherit eternal life?
 - The Victorians idealized childhood, and that still permeates our reading of this text. But Jesus isn't holding up children as an ideal here - rather, they are an example of how one enters the kingdom of God. They aren't ideal and perfect; but the disciples can certainly learn from the way they come to Jesus. How might you learn from the way children come to Jesus?

Microsong: "Like a Little Child Would" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/49pibOyjINc>)

The people bring their children to Jesus. The disciples shoo them away. When Jesus sees this, he is indignant and says, "Don't stop the children from coming, they're near to the center of it all. And beyond that, if you can't accept God's good government like a little child would, you don't get it at all!" (God's good government)

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/auG5fPUy60I>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, oh ohhhh
A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.
God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.
Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Oh ohhh.
The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.
Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"
Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"
Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.
God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.
Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love.
Corruption in the temple then God sends Samuel.
God gives them a prophet, they ask for a king. Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets. And when a bully rules the land, the nation tears apart and loses David's heart...
A widow's gift and a prophet's cry. God brings life in desperate times.
Josiah reads this misplaced scroll. He turns to God wholeheartedly like David did. In his time.
God gives Jeremiah a picture of God's ruined family...
Is there any hope left, is there any hope left, is there any hope left for you, Jerusalem?
Any hope? Any hope left? Is there any hope left for you?
By the streams of Babylon, how can we sing when you are gone, Jerusalem...
I'm in a valley of human bones. These bones are Israel, God's breath is hope.
Haman plans death for Esther's exiles. She risks her life so they might survive.
Finally God's family rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem. God plunges them into a sea of joy and celebration of Only God. God is One, Only God.
Comfort to Jerusalem, your warfare finally ceases.
Matthew lists these generations, Abraham to Jesus
The angel says, "You'll have a son and God will give him David's throne." Mary says, "God looked at me, now I'm the luckiest person around.
Mary, now pregnant fiancé, makes a grueling journey.
She has her baby, shepherds see angels declaring God's glory and peace among people.
The Spirit sends shepherds and elders and prophets to tell those who wait their Messiah has come.
Herod gets nervous, the Magi find Jesus. They hide their discovery and hurry back home...
Once again an angel comes to Joseph -- so they make good their escape, oooh.
Jesus in the temple, astonishing the crowd. Jesus with his parents. Jesus growing up.
Down by the Jordan with the prophet John, Jesus asks to be baptized. And the skies are opened. A dove descends. A voice from heaven says, "This is my son, the son I love. I'm pleased with him."
Jesus calls disciples to be with him in the work he's doing. Ohhh ooohhh.
Jesus teaches the disciples, "This is life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty. You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is pure. This is life inside the blessing."
Jesus walks on the water. Peter tries and begins to sink. Jesus grabs his hand and the wind dies down.
Jesus sees the crowds with compassion. So he teaches them for days and days. The people are hungry. There's baskets left over and no one left out.
People bring their children to Jesus. Jesus blesses them and says, "You must accept God's good government like a little child would or you won't get in at all." Ohhhh ohhh
God loves every one of us, it's true. And God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!