

2026 ALL-AGE TALK, 23.8.26, MARK 10:13-16

'POLICING JESUS...?' – OR NO STOPPING JESUS' BLESSING

The tabloids are once again obsessing over Harry & Meghan, following their recent return to the UK. These two are members of the extended Royal family, which the papers love to hate. (And to give others permission to hate too). Now, on top of this it looks as if us taxpayers will have to find money to finance Harry & Meghan's security. The issues around security for high-profile figures, with all that's happened in recent months – and ever since the death of Jo Cox MP – is a very real & pressing one. British politics – is very messy & toxic right now. Who would want to be our PM, or a political leader of any persuasion?... We are an unruly people, not listening to those we disagree with. More important, not listening to God either...

Can you imagine what a security detail would have looked like for Jesus? How much this might have cost... Of course, there were plenty of people who tried to 'police Jesus'. Some politely, some less than politely. To begin with, there was his family, who tried to get him to come home early in his ministry. There were the teachers of the law, who regularly tried to obstruct him in different ways. The disciples also tried to 'police Jesus', by calling him away from his time of quiet with his Heavenly Father. There was Peter rebuking Jesus for talking about his imminent death. The last attempt to 'police Jesus', before his triumphal entry & arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane was here in Mark 10.

Let's try to see this from the disciples viewpoint shall we? They felt they had a very important job. They were on an urgent mission with Jesus. And he didn't need any 'unwanted' distractions. So, they attempted to stop families from bringing their little children for Jesus to touch them & bless them. WOW... What a colossal mistake that was by the disciples... Mark says that Jesus was 'indignant' when he saw this happening. We don't see many similar words used to describe his reaction to other attempts to 'police' his ministry. (Except that time the Pharisees refused to give their 'permission' for Jesus to heal a person on the Sabbath). Here in Mark 10, Jesus has a strong reaction to something which the disciples thought they were doing for the best. How easy it is – for all of us believers – to get our priorities wrong. Sometimes we need to hear the rebuke of Jesus to put us right, don't we...?.

I'm reminded of a discussion we had at a deacons meeting in a previous church. A homeless person had been sleeping outside one of the doors of the church building. A fellow church leader said the deacons had to do something to make sure this 'unwanted' person did not return...! I have to say, I nearly unleashed a verbal onslaught at this deacon for this comment. (So contrary to the gospel of Jesus!). Thankfully I somehow held my tongue & other leaders were able to suggest a more positive attitude & approach.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Let these little ones come to me". And to reinforce the point, he turned this into a negative command: "Do **not** hinder them". Then he launched straight into a teaching opportunity about the Kingdom of God, centred upon these particular children... This was not the only time he did this. On another occasion, just before this particular episode in Mark 10, when there was an argument about who was the greatest, Jesus asked a little child to come and stand in the midst of them. "If you welcome a little one like this, you welcome me...". The disciples had clearly not listened.

Jesus declares: "The Kingdom of God belongs to such as these". Jesus said something similar at the start of his ministry with the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God". The most glorious & amazing Kingdom of all – this belongs to the weakest, the poorest, the smallest of all. Those who the world often treats as least important, are most important to our Father God. If we want to press into God's Kingdom, we first have to push past all these 'little people'... We need to see ourselves through the eyes of these simplest & lowest. Through the eyes of our glorious Christ, who often (not always) comes to us as a child, or as a Lamb.

I was struck by a discovery I made as I prepared this talk for today. I did an internet search for 'inspiring stories **about** children'. What came up? All the results which came up were for 'inspiring stories **for** children'... What does that tell us? It tells us that adults are sure we have more to teach children than children have to teach us...

Jesus says something very different here. Jesus tells us we have so much to learn from children. Indeed, the only way for anyone to enter the Kingdom of God is to start again & to become once again like a child. Each of us, every day, need to learn from the simple faith of children. Their capacity for wonder. Their desire to explore & to discover. Seeing the world through their eyes is

something like re-entering the Garden of Eden. It's about un-learning the knowledge of evil. It's about shaking off the cynicism & complications of being an adult. It's about re-discovering our true selves as children of God. As little ones, close to the heart of our Heavenly Father...

To be practical for a moment: Carey is right to put such a high priority on Safeguarding children & adults at risk. That's as it should be. Jesus also has something to say about protecting little ones from harm & evil. But what this story shows is something that is even more important: the desire to bless those who are apparently 'the least & the lowest' is at the very heart of Jesus' mission & the Kingdom of God.

How will these children grow into the potential God wants for them? Let's continue to remember these children & their families in our prayers shall we? I know us older generations are facing many challenges today. But there is an argument that the younger generations are facing even bigger challenges in these days.

Luke's gospel gives us a unique insight into Jesus' upbringing with the story of the boy Jesus at the Temple. (Read Luke 2:46 & 47). What impressed all those other experts in the law was not just the answers Jesus gave, but the way he listened & the questions he asked them.

Children's capacity for learning is great to see. Carey also needs to keep encouraging children to take time to listen for God's voice. Just like the boy Samuel, as he lay on his bed... So, I look forward to seeing what the children have produced in a moment. I look forward to anything they might have learned today or recently. And to any insights they might have for us, today or in the future. There's no telling how Jesus will bless these children. And no telling how Jesus will bless us through them. 'The Kingdom of God belongs to such as these'. Thanks be to God! Alleluia!