Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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Ez 2:8—3:4; *Matt 18:1-5, 10, 12-14*

When the disciples asked Jesus who was the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven, his answer may have surprised them. A child? In what way is a child great? In that time and place, children were a burden until they were big enough to work in the fields or contribute some other service.

Jesus' estimation of children as first in the Kingdom and especially loved by God fits his consistent message that worldly priorities had to be turned upside down to understand how God sees what is important. The first shall be last. Greatness is measured in humility, leadership in service, moral authority in innocence.

The new creation that Jesus proclaimed was to be built upon the first creation, especially from the beginning, before sin entered the garden to estrange humanity from God. In the beginning, God walked with human beings in their first innocence, as a parent walks with children in the cool of the evening, delighting in their curiosity and playfulness, cherishing a face-to-face intimacy with them unspoiled by any hint of shame or self-consciousness.

This pure relationship is captured in Jesus' description of children, whose angels in heaven "always look upon the face of my heavenly Father." God's gaze is direct and

continuous care, unbroken by the turning away from God that was the first sin, as Adam and Eve hid from God after their disobedience.

The memory of their first innocence is preserved in the faces of children, and their simple intimacy with God is why they reflect the image and likeness of God. Jesus will restore this image to all of humanity by his redemptive self-sacrifice.

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