

FEBRUARY 11, 2023 FPC PORT HURON, FIRST LIGHT WORSHIP SERVICE, 8:30 A.M. PASTOR ROXIE DAVIS "First Light" Worship, 8:30 a.m.. SERMON: THE LIGHT OF LOVE, Scripture: Luke 18: 15-17

Prayer of Illumination: I will read Scripture in the midst of Sermon.

We are in a new Preaching Series: Light in the Darkness. And today, theme is The Light of Love. Many of you know that, the **children at the Traditional 10:00 service**—are doing a **Valentine's Play**—"Light of Love"—Very appropriate because of this coming week We celebrate various kinds of "love" on Valentine's Day. Today you and I are going to contemplate our love and obligation to share God's love with children. So for us here at the "First Light" worship, we are going to have a Dialogue Sermon between you and me.

What is a Dialogue Sermon? You are going to get a chance to respond to some of what I say and even share some thoughts as part of the sermon, about your experiences. **The Sermon is really about children and about love for them—love that comes from God and love that comes from others—particularly us.**

Scripture: Luke 18: 15-17 Where Jesus welcomes the little children..

¹⁵ People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

My first question is: "Why do the disciples want to keep the children away from Jesus?" They even rebuke the parents for bringing infants and children to Jesus.

What do you think? Children insignificant. No status in that culture. Perhaps Jesus too busy to be bothered. Jesus is weary perhaps—the disciples are very protective of him. **What does Jesus do?** Calls the children to him and says: "Let the little children come to me. Do not **hinder** them.

So **don't stand in their way**—it is a call to give them access and encouragement to be with Jesus—get to know God. We are to be a part of that. Parents were part of that. They brought the children to Jesus. (Implications of bringing children to church to learn about Jesus).

To help them to see Jesus. (Some of us have done that and our children have fallen away from the faith. Fear not—God has them in the palm of His hand. The values taught—foundations built will stand like a rock in their lives. But still need to encourage them to dwell with the family of God—encouragement in the walk of life.

Let's go on. Jesus goes on: "Do not hinder them, for **the kingdom of God belongs to such as these**. Truly, I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God **like a little child** will never enter it. **What is the Kingdom of God?** This kingdom was not a place where God reigns, but rather the reign of God itself – God's rule, authority, and power. Now Jesus says: The reign of God, Jesus says, is at hand. **What does that mean to receive the Kingdom of God as a child?** Openness—no pre-conceived ideas. Simple Faith; Simple Trust; Innocence; Humility, Acceptance Children will easily follow a good leader. Children will easily love when they are first loved.

WHY DOES JESUS HIGHLIGHT A CHILD?

It is very apparent that Jesus likes being around children and certainly demonstrates His love for them: "Let the little children come unto me."

Why does Jesus highlight a child? Children seem to play a significant role throughout the gospels. He raises their status by putting children in same breath as the kingdom of God. (Just like he does women—who don't count for anything except for birthing children.)

CHILDREN HAVE A DOMINATE PLACE IN THE GOSPELS--EXAMPLES

Jarius goes to Jesus (Woman who touches his cloak) asking for Jesus to heal his daughter. She is sick and dying (everyone convinced of that she is dead—don't bother the Teacher--Rabbi) but Jesus goes to Jairus' house and even through the mockery and laughter of those around, Jesus raises her up and she lives. **Mark 9: 14-29**

The boy with the spirit—Jesus heals him. The spirit makes him not able to speak; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. The Spirit sees Jesus and is thrown on the ground. The boy has had the Spirit all his life. Father there—confirms that. Jesus rebuked unclean spirit.

And the boy is healed. **Mark 9:35-37** We have the disciples arguing on their way to Capernaum. And Jesus asks what they were arguing about. They were silent. Because they were arguing about who was the greatest! **Jesus gives them this**

commandment: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." It is then that He takes a little child and puts The child among them, and taking the child in his arms, he said to them: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my

name, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes, not just me, but the One who sent me.—His Father.”

In this Scripture, Mark 9, we seem to get a **different reason**. Jesus pulls a child aside just after his disciples have been **arguing** about **who among them is greatest**, just after Jesus himself has said **“anyone who wants to be first must be the very last”** (Mark 9:35). As I said before, In the first century, children had **very little status**. They did **not rank highly** in the social order. And notice what else Jesus says. He says, “whoever **welcomes** one of these little children **IN MY NAME.**” To **bear someone’s name meant** that you carried their **authority**; you were their **representative**. This child of no status represents Jesus. Sign on their forehead—“I am a Child of God.” (Hard sometimes when we are **teaching in school**. Some of you know that I was a Foster Grandparent—then Substitute Teacher—when we first retired from the ministry—2013. It was hard to see that sign on some kids’ head—“I am a Child of God—I represent Jesus.” Treat me with love. Not always easy.)

Signs: “Praying for our Schools. **Really also praying for ourselves** to have some loving, positive influence over children, not only in school, but in our lives. **Still have signs available**). **If the disciples want to be great, they must be like this child.** If we want to be great in God’s kingdom, We must surrender our position/status In life, and realize that true greatness doesn’t come from our own strength and wisdom. **True greatness comes from bearing Jesus’ name. Simply loving as Jesus loves, Question for all of us: How are we each bear Jesus’ name?**

Examine ourselves: Where are we seeking glory and status in the eyes of the world? Where do we need to become more like this child, humbly devoting ourselves to bearing Jesus’ name? **Mark 9: 42 Warning to all of us** If any of you put a **stumbling block** before one of these **little ones** who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. **We have to take our role with children very seriously—teaching them the faith.** Sometimes we can do that the best, when we remember who and how someone helped us to come to faith, particularly in those early years of our life. Some of us didn’t even have that experience, and came to faith later in life.

QUESTION OF THE DAY:

When you were growing up, Who helped you and How were you helped, to see God’s Light of Love? Turn to someone near you and have that conversation. I will give you a few minutes. Afterwards, we will share Who was a Faith-builder in our

lives—not a stone around their necks but they placed stones--rocks (Jesus) for us to walk on? **May we have childlike faith and do not hinder children in coming to faith in Jesus. May we be like those who taught us the faith, Giving time and attention to the children in our lives—and in this church—Just like Jesus did.**

May we just “**love on them**” like Jesus does all the time with us—and like those people in our lives that loved on us and made a huge difference in our lives. May we shine God’s Light of Love into the lives of children—Jesus calls us to do that—because that is what He did.

TWO SCRIPTURES THAT THE CHILDREN WERE REQUIRED TO MEMORIZE FOR

THE PLAY: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22: 37-38 We love because God first loved us. I John 4:19

THE MESSAGE FOR THE TRADITIONAL WORSHIP, VALENTINE PLAY BY CHILDREN, “THE LIGHT OF LOVE,” 10:00 A.M. SCRIPT: VALENTINE’S PLAY, (written in 2024) “THE LIGHT OF LOVE”

Kid Leader (Lindy): OK, everyone, gather round. I think the teachers are planning a Scavenger Hunt for the GIFT and for THE MOUNTAIN MOVER CLASS today.

1st Kid Assistant (Alex): WooHoo 1,2,3

All:: Yes!! (*motion with hand*) Hip Hip Hoorah!!

2nd Kid Assistant (Ollie): Maybe they will send us out to find some things **in nature**—like Rocks

Mila:

Yea, maybe??? Pastor Roxie talked about Jesus being our Rock a couple of weeks ago.

Benjamin: Maybe they will want us to hunt for tree branches and leaves

Jonathan: Maybe they want us to clean up those yards near the Black River.

And we could get really muddy!! That would be fun!

Helen: (*Say really excited*) Maybe we can hunt for snowballs—then we could have a snowball fight.

1st Assistant (Alex): No—I don’t think so. Have you been outside? We don’t even have snow and it is still February. **Jaylin:** Bummer! **1st Assistant (Alex):** Maybe they will send us to hunt for **food**. I am always really hungry.

Kaylee: We could hunt for cake and ice cream in the Fellowship Hall.

Alayna: I don’t think so. Remember, it was just last week that we celebrated people’s birthdays.

Jonathan: Maybe they will send us out to hunt for pizza...You know, we are suppose to eat pizza before we go ice skating today.

Jaylin: We could be the **delivery people**

Benjamin: I don't think this Scavenger Hunt is about food—
They never want us to be too sugared up when we have class.

Kid Leader(Lindy): Here come our teachers. They'll know.

1st Teacher (Joan): Hi kids. We are going on a Scavenger Hunt today.

Kid Leader Lindy: 1,2,3, **All:** Yea, we ALREADY know.

1st Teacher (Joan): Oh. OK. Do you know what you will be looking for?

1st Kid Assistant (Alex): No, we figure it is a surprise.

1st Teacher (Joan): Well, it sort of is.

2nd Teacher (Jenny):

Since it is Valentine's Day this next week, the Scavenger Hunt is about Love.

2nd Kid Assistant (Ollie): You mean that kissy, huggy, girlfriend, boyfriend stuff.

Kid Leader(Lindy): Well, if that is what it is, **Then I'm out of here.**

1st Teacher (Joan): No it is not "that kissy, huggy girlfriend, boyfriend stuff.."

The Scavenger Hunt is about God's Love—God's Love that Shines in the Darkness.
The Light of Love.

2nd Teacher (Jenny):

Here's the deal. We want you to hunt for objects of light. Then tell us about how each object represents God's Light of Love. You got it?!

Kid Leader (Lindy): OK—I think we got what you mean.

Benjamin I am not sure. Some of us are a little "light" headed. *(looks at his brother)*

1st Kid Assistant (Alex): We will be fine. We need to split into three teams.

(The Kid leader/1st Asst./2nd Asst. split into 3 Groups)

1st Teacher (Joan): And this book will help. Each Team needs a Bible.

2nd Teacher (Jenny): The Bible tells you all about God's love being the light in the darkness. *(Hand out Bibles, one to each group).*

1st. Teacher (Joan): Oh, I almost forgot. Part of the Game is you will hunt for your "light objects in the dark." *(Techy people Shut off all the lights).*

Kid Leader (Lindy): No problem. Right, kids? 1.2.3 **All:** Right! We have our Flashlights. *(Everyone pulls their flashlight out of their pockets or from the front pews).*

Kid Leader (Lindy):

Everyone ready? Go find some "light" objects and bring them back.

(Music is played while they flash their lights everywhere except in people's eyes. Pews, ceiling, windows. One group gets several lamp stands. One group gets candles. One group makes like they are going outside and get sunshine in a bottle—flashlights to fit in the bottles. A couple of kids gets feathers (a "light" object like "not heavy.")

(When they all come back. When everyone gets to the front, two kids run up from the back, with bird feathers.

1st Kid With Feather (Jonathan): Look what we found. We found these bird feathers. They are nice and **light**.

2nd Kid with Feather (Benjamin) Yea, they are not very heavy at all! Look! *(Throws it up in the air)*

1st Teacher (Joan): That is not quite what we had in mind.

2nd Teacher (Jenny): We were thinking more about Light “as in brightness.” You know like stars and moon and sun.

1st Kid with Feather (Jonathan): Oh, well, we were close.

2nd Kid with Feather (Benjamin): The birds are always flying near the sun and the moon and the stars—you know—in the sky.

1st Teacher (Joan): That’s true.

2nd Teacher (Jenny): We appreciate your effort. Why don’t you join Group 2.

(The two boys move to their respective groups) Group 1, tell us what you found.

GROUP NO. 1: *(The kids hold up their jars).*

1st Teacher: You found jars???. *(They hold up their jars—some are empty. Others have little yellow construction paper “sun” in them).*

Kid Leader (Lindy): Yea, we went outside and captured some sunshine in these jars.

Group 1 Kid (Miah): But some of us put our flashlights in our jars just so you would get the idea!

Group 1 Kid (Helen): Others of us just look like sunshine!! And we ARE the sunshine! *(twirl around showing off her yellow/orange skirt and smiling at the people and bowing).*

Group 1 Kid (Betty): *(Opens Bible)* It says at the very beginning of the Bible:

“God created Light, to light our world. God created the Sun for the Day and the Moon for the night.

Group 1 Kid (Miah): The Sun and the Moon and all creation tells us God loves us. It reminds us of that song: “Rise and Shine”

SONG: Rise and Shine and give God the glory, glory. Rise and Shine and Give God Your Glory, Glory. Rise and Shine and Give God Your Glory, Glory. Rise and Shine and Give God Your Glory, Glory, Children of the Lord. (Repeat)

1st Teacher (Joan): Great job. Thank you Group 1.

2nd Teacher (Jenny): What about you, Group 2?

GROUP 2: *(The kids show off their lamps).*

Kid 1st Assistant (Alex) We found a bunch of lamps as you can see.

They give off a lot of light, when they are plugged in. We just couldn't find any outlets. Just a moment please! *(They go looking for some outlets and plug the lamps in.)*

Group 2 Kid (Mila): We know that Jesus is the Light of the World. But then in the Bible, Jesus says **TO US** :**"You** are the light of the world. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a table—No, they put it on the table so it gives light to the whole room. Jesus also says: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

1st Teacher (Joan): Good work, group! That reminds ME of a song, Kids, turn on those flashlights and let's sing: "This Little Light of Mine."

SONG: THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE *(With flashlights)*

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. (2 Times) Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Hide it under a bushel, No. I'm gonna let it shine (2 times) Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. (Repeat the Chorus)

2nd Teacher (Jenny): And Group 3: What do you have?

GROUP 3 *(They show off their Christmas candles)*

2nd Kid Assistant (Ollie) We found these candles in the Christmas closet. They make us think about "us"—you and me.

Group 3 Kid (Alayna): God wants US to take His light into the world, We carry **His light** just like we carry these candles. **And you know what? All: What?**

Group 3 Kid (Alayna): We shine the brightest light when we love each other. Here is what it says in the Bible. *(Holds up the Bible).* We all know this verse. Let's say it together. **All:** Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22

Group 3 Kid (Kaylee) We know another Bible verse too. Let's say it together::

All: "We love, because God first loved us." 1 John 4

1st Teacher (Joan): God IS Love. God IS Light. God asks us to shine His light into the world. That message is in the song: "This Little Light of Mine"

SONG: This Little Light of Mine We've Got the Light of Love...We're going to let it shine. Chorus This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. (2 times) Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. We've got the Light of Love, we're going to let it shine. (2 Times) Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine. (Repeat the Chorus)

Kid Leader (Lindy): What a great Scavenger Hunt! We all win with God's Light of Love in our lives. **Pastor Roxie:** Let us say to everyone!

All: Happy Valentine's Day—We Love You. God Loves You and there is nothing you can do about it! (Throw a Kiss).