

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Amos 7:7-15
Psalm 85:8-13
Ephesians 1:3-14
Mark 6:14-29

Good morning. My sermon today is entitled, “Lessons from the Little Ones: Stories from Vacation Bible School. We had an historic event the last week of June at CCG in temperatures in the mid to high nineties. We had 52 children participate in VBS with lots of volunteers (including our youth) to shepherd the little ones. I see many of you here today that participated in VBS. Thank you so much for teaching, playing, and caring for the little ones in our parish and community. We had many children whose parents are not members of our parish, so this was a tremendous “outreach” event as well.

Our theme for VBS was “Abundant Life” and I was fortunate to teach the “Faith” component. I am very grateful to my companions, Alice Fitts, a youth member, and Lucy Rinaldi, our senior warden. Lucy and Alice dressed in various costumes, and I had the easy job of running, jumping, playing, with the children. I did climb a tree in the memorial garden acting as a lost sheep for each of our four sessions. We began each lesson with the children listening to Lucy tell a Bible story and then we did an activity to reinforce it. It’s kind of funny that I thought we were going to teach the children when in fact, they taught us many life lessons, Today, I am going to focus on three of them.

Our first life lesson came from 3-year-old, Jack. Lucy was telling the story of baby Moses being born during a time when the king of Egypt didn’t want any baby boys around. His mother placed him in a wicker basket among the reeds for protection, and his big sister, Miriam, watched as Pharaoh’s daughter found him. Pharaoh’s daughter did not know how to care for

him. Miriam, being the greatest big sis ever, suggested that she could find someone to nurse the baby. Cleverly or cunningly, she brought her mother, the baby's mother, to nurse and care for him. Pharaoh's daughter named him Moses, which means, to pull out/to draw out. After Lucy told this story dressed as Miriam, Jack, shared that we needed to care for him like baby Moses. He was little and needed us to care for him. Thank you, Jack, for reminding us that we need to care for others as Miriam and Pharaoh's daughter cared for baby Moses. We often forget the basic call to go out of our comfort zone and care for others, no matter their size, but especially our little ones. I witnessed our volunteers caring for the little ones all during the week. When little Paul, grandson of big Paul, threw his arms in a sideways hug around his youth volunteer with his head resting on the youth volunteer's head, William embraced him in a safe church sideways hug. When the children were writing a "God Loves You" card to our homebound parishioners, James, a youth leader, placed his hand around a little one's hand to help him write the letters. When one of the little ones was struggling with leaving her mommy, youth leader, Brook, took Emmie under her wings like a mother hen. She even wrote a special card for young Emmie filled with words of love.

The second lesson we learned from the little ones involved a lost sheep and a gold coin. Lucy told the children the story of the woman who lost a gold coin and how she searched and searched for it. Naturally, the first activity involved us hiding chocolate gold coins in the memorial garden for the children to find. They searched quickly and were pleasantly rewarded with delicious, melted chocolate. Lucy then told the story of Jesus leaving the 99 sheep to search for the lost sheep. Now this is where four-year-old Ryan shared his wisdom with us. We asked the children how Jesus knows where to look for us when we are lost. Without hesitation,

Ryan said that “God can track our souls.” Amazingly, Ryan made the connection between God and our very souls. The GPS part was a bonus. Ryan reminded us that we are never separated from God because he or she is connected to our inner being, our soul, and can find us whenever and wherever we are lost. The children had great fun finding Alice who was dressed in a sheep’s costume and hiding in the memorial garden. I, wearing, a sheep’s head piece, hid as well but in a tree. This is where we learned the third life lesson.

This lesson was taught to us by little Paul, grandson of big Paul. The three younger groups had difficulty finding me in a tree and the volunteers had to hint at my location. For the older group, there was no help provided. This group set off at a quick pace running all around the memorial garden and cemetery. They searched from one end of the garden to the other side of the cemetery to no avail. Then Paul did the most amazing thing. He climbed the wall of the memorial garden and scanned the horizon, looking down and then finally up where he spotted me. “There she is. I found the lost sheep. Look up!” The lesson little Paul taught us is that often we need to a broader perspective on a problem or situation. We need to look at the big picture. What is hidden may be in plain view if we open our hearts and minds to a different perspective, a different line of thinking and seeing.

We learned many more lessons from the little ones, and I plan to put these nuggets in many more sermons to come. Thank you, parents, and grandparents for sharing your children. Thank you, children for sharing your hearts, minds, and bodies with us. You are truly a treasure. Amen.