

April 30 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

Let There Be Light: A Study of FPC Stained-Glass Windows – Christ and the Children

First Presbyterian Church has been blessed with parishioner memorial gifts of 15 beautiful stained-glass windows over the years, as summarized in the wonderful guide put together by Virginia Wiley in 1990, as part of the 175 year anniversary celebration of the church. The window of focus is that of Jesus and the children, located in the Chapel.

The window is one of five that were moved from our former church on Ninth and Court Streets, which was dedicated on May 8, 1900. The window depicts Jesus with the children as conveyed in Luke 18:16 where Jesus says, *“Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of God.”* The window shows Jesus robed in white with gold trim, signifying His sinlessness and glory. His cloak is red in color, signifying His suffering and sacrifice for all on the cross. Jesus is shown holding a child with three mothers bringing their children to Jesus. The children are clothed in white, representing innocence with the mothers robed in blue and brown symbolizing hope and humility. Two men, possibly Biblical patriarchs, are depicted in the background. The patriarch on the left is possibly Moses, who instructed God’s people in *Deuteronomy 6:6-7 to place God’s commandments on their hearts and impress them on their children, talking about them when sitting at home, when on the road, when lying down and when getting up.* The large mandala that frames the window is bordered by twelve semi-circular windows shrouded by twelve small oculus windows. The number 12 in the Bible is a symbol of perfection, authority, completeness, and God’s governmental foundation. It is often used in a context of government, such as the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 minor prophets, the 12 apostles, and the 12 foundation stones of the heavenly city. The number 12 is also associated with the second coming of Jesus Christ and God’s judgment on Earth and is found in 187 places in the Bible, with Revelation alone having 22 occurrences of the number.

Revelation 7 conveys that twelve thousand from each of the 12 tribes of Israel will receive salvation during the end time’s Great Tribulation. Possibly the same as those in chapter 7 will be taken from earth in order to serve and follow the Lamb of God as in Revelation 14. Christ’s bride in Revelation 12, the church, wears a crown containing twelve stars. The New Jerusalem, which is made in heaven and brought to the earth by God himself, contains 12 gates made of pearl that are each manned by an angel. Over each gate will be one of the names of Israel’s twelve tribes. The walls are 144 cubits high (12 multiplied by itself in Revelation 21), with the city itself being 12,000 furlongs square.

All three synoptic Gospels tell of the story of Jesus and the little children where He receives them and blesses them in the laying on of His hands (Luke 18:15-17, Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15). As was the Jewish custom, mothers would bring their children to some distinguished Rabbi on the first birthday that he might bless them. We are told that *‘people were bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 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. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*

From *Psalm 127:3-5: ‘Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.’* From *Proverbs 17:6: ‘Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged.’* We are specifically commanded in scripture to train up a child in the way he or she should go. *Bring them up in the training and instructions of the Lord and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6)

Moses instructs the people in *Deuteronomy 6:4-9: ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These*

commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.'

Parents are to be diligent in teaching and talking to their children about spiritual matters. While teaching may refer to more formal instruction, talking implies the informal. Most opportunities occur in the natural flow of life. Circumstances and situations arise where we can impart the values of our beliefs. Kids can see first-hand in a practical, down to earth way how our spiritual priorities drive our decisions. Parents, let our children hear us pray, let them see us read our Bibles and let them see us in worship, singing and praising to the Lord our God. Let the Word of God be on our mouth, in our hearts and impress them upon our children. Jesus loves the children and desires them to come to Him as we see in the text. The parents are bringing their children to Jesus and the disciples want to turn them away, but Jesus rebukes them by saying "bring them unto me." We are to bring our children to Christ. We are to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and teach them His commands, leading by example.

In Matthew 18:1-6, Jesus speaks further of having the heart of a child and care for God's little ones. *The disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* The disciples were often concerned about the question of greatness. They seem to ask this question thinking that Jesus has already chosen one of them as **greatest**, or as if they wanted Jesus to decide among them. The disciples wanted to know who would hold the highest position in the administration Jesus would soon establish. They doubtless envisioned a temporal kingdom of the Messiah, in which places would be bestowed. They dreamt of a distribution of honors and offices, a worldly monarchy, like the kingdoms of the earth. Jesus called a little child to Him, who willingly was drawn to Him. Jesus drew their attention to His *nature* by having them look at a child as an example. This was probably a great disappointment to the disciples for in that day, children were regarded more as property than individuals. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard. Jesus said we have to take this kind of humble place to enter the kingdom, much less be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus knew that we must be **converted** to be like little children as it is not our nature to take the low place and to humble ourselves.

Rev. George Morgan, a British evangelist and Bible scholar is quoted: "The essential fact in the transformation Christ works is that He changes the great ones into little children."

With each year that passes, we as adults are to never forget the words of blessing of *Psalm 139: You are a child of God You are wonderfully made, dearly loved, and precious in His sight. Before God made you, He knew you... There is no one else like you!* Words of blessing carry the weight and authority of heaven. God's blessings are meant to protect us, to guide us on the path of righteousness, and to give us hope. They remind us of who we are and where we are going.

From *1 John 3:1, 'we are called children of God out of the great love that the Father has lavished on us. As children of God this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.'* (1 John 3:16-18)

Songs to reflect and pray on:

[\(195\) Third Day - Children of God - with Lyrics - YouTube](#)

[\(189\) Jesus Loves the Little Children Lyrics || Sunday School song - YouTube](#)