

Day 27

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” 9.33-50; 10.13-16, 35-45

If Jesus' heart has already been pierced by his disciples' failure to comprehend his anguish in the face of his impending suffering, it is as though the knife is now turned to inflict maximum hurt. Their attention has already shifted from his suffering to their own status. Even with their low level of understanding, they are too ashamed to admit it to Jesus.



Jesus doesn't rebuke them for adding insult to their injury of him, but he doesn't let this opportunity pass to give them an object lesson about status in his kingdom. He calls the twelve, and then places a child in their midst. Taking the child (and later children) in his arms, he issues four stern warnings:

1. Don't fail to welcome children in my name: to do so is to welcome me and God who sent me.
2. Don't (dare) cause a little one who believes in me to sin.
3. Don't hinder children coming to me, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.
4. Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

The disciples are slow learners. Between warning 2 and 3 they try to stop children coming to Jesus. For this they are rebuked. Then, after Jesus' third and most graphic foretelling of his passion, they fall right back into the very type of attitude that sparked the lesson off: who will get the seats of honour in the kingdom?

As he did before introducing the child illustrations, Jesus employs the metaphor of servants (9.35), and then slaves (10.44). Finally, he holds up his own example: the divine Son of Man who has taken on the role of a servant and – hear it a fourth time! – will lay down his life. There lies the path to greatness in Jesus' kingdom.

? How concerned are you with your status in the world and the Church?

 Lord Jesus Christ, you emptied yourself of your glory in order to come and serve us. Help me to surrender my own ambitions and to take on the role of your servant to even the least; for your name's sake. Amen.