

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 3, 2021



## RIGHTS

*It's about respecting dignity*

by Drew Downs

Some Christians talk a lot about their personal rights. But there are a few reasons many others have a hard time talking about rights. Chief among them: that whole God-at-the-center-of-things thing.

And yet, our baptismal covenant directs us into different territory than we're used to hearing in the media. We pledge to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being".

The fundamental problem for me in focusing on my personal rights is it means my attention is not on respecting the dignity of every human being. Not just me or even the people like me. Every. Or, to put it another way, all of them.

Rights, as we know them, are entirely functions of relationship. Therefore, they are to create just, peace-making relationships which fulfill the dignity demanded by God.

# ORDINARY TIME

*Summer 2021*

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## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

This was not how I wanted to spend the week. At home playing the game "Is That a Symptom?"

Last Monday, my son tested positive for COVID, so he has been at home, quarantining. Which meant that we have, too.

And if you've enjoyed that lovely experience yourself, then you also know how confusing all of the phone calls and text message can be related to keeping us healthy.

And, of course, **that** more than anything else, is the point. Our health. Not my health. Or even the health of my son. Ours. This project is about all of us.

As he nears the end of his quarantine symptom-free (just a bit tired) and we are triply grateful for the vaccines protecting the rest of us, I am mindful of just how connected we are. Whether we like it or not.

I am also mindful of the inverse - how not *not* connected we are. At no point did I feel far from you or without hope. Generous offerings of food meant we never went hungry. That is tangible and (dare I say?) sacramental - the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. But I also know that inward and spiritual grace, too.

In the days ahead, join me in seeking that grace. Not just the stuff we know (or the stuff we know we know?) but the stuff inside it all. In any kindness, any source of dignity and hope. Anything we know as real. Because grace is everywhere.

Drew+

# ORDINARY TIME

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost*

October 3, 2021

### **Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **Reading**

From Mark 10:2-16

"People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.""

### **Reflection**

What a line!

"whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child..."

It is so rich with possibility. It is also kind of confusing, isn't it? Really, what does it mean?

Do we take him literally? To act like a child?

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Or another form of literally – to *be* a child when the kin-dom comes. In other words: only kids go to heaven? Is that the point? Probably not.

This is after Jesus took a child into his arms and said welcome children because welcoming children is welcoming God.

Then when they tried to stop someone from healing in Jesus's name, Jesus told *them* not to be stumbling blocks. But here they are *again* shutting people down! *No!* he's saying *let them come to me*.

I think our instincts may be right, but for the wrong reasons. Jesus is saying that there *is* something about children that we should look at. Something that makes them special in the eyes of God.

Except that we can't take it on like some kind of life-hack. We can't say children are special because they are innocent, and then choose to be innocent while also being world-weary. We don't get to be adults and children both. Or worse. Adults who take the special place of children.

For the last four weeks, we've heard about the disciples missing the point. About the Messiah and greatness. Then they tried to stop an exorcist from saving lives and now they are trying to stop people from bringing children to Jesus. As much as we might want to understand what Jesus is saying about children and the Dream of God, there is a more pressing and obvious learning we should take from the gospel.

Maybe we're wrong. And have been.

It isn't about what we want. Nor are we called to be individually *better* Christians. This isn't a competition. We're called to love. Each of us and all of us. Together.

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