

We Are Not Alone
Genesis 2:18-23, Mark 10:13-16
Center Church
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Come look at this window over here. It's Jesus with the little children, the story that Xyon read. Everyone looks so glad to be there. It's so sweet.

That's not what this was like at the beginning. Interesting that the disciples are sidelined in this window, just kids and moms up front, ironically. This church has more women in its stained-glass windows than any I have ever seen! It's wonderful!

No, at the beginning of the story the disciples looked at the moms and the children and said, "Get out of here! You don't belong here! He's an important person and only important people like us can be around him!" **Jesus had to tell the disciples, not the children, to be quiet**, the story says he was "indignant at the disciples," which means he was really upset with them! Then he really stuck it to them by saying that they needed to be more like children to be close to God. Children! The disciples must have been dumbfounded! Aghast! Shocked!

So, they got pushed to the side of the picture, and this window shows what happened next.

There's a word that a lot of people are using these days about any number of situations: **privilege**. Privilege means a special right given only to a certain person or kind of people. The disciples thought they were privileged to be with Jesus because they were his best friends. They thought only people like them should have the privilege of sitting by Jesus and talking with him. In fact, this is not the only time they got upset with someone talking to Jesus that they didn't think deserved it: several different women, people of different religions, people they thought of as enemies, like the Romans. Jesus

kept telling the disciples they were wrong, but they had trouble getting it, because they liked being privileged. Who doesn't?

The only people who don't like privilege are the ones who don't have any. And in many places still today, the biggest group of those people are still children, and especially in this country, children whose skin looks darker than mine, or who speak a language other than English as their first language, or who come from families who don't have a lot of money or stuff. It's always been like that here, and in other parts of the world, too.

What do you think Jesus would say about people who think children are less important than adults, or who think that some children don't deserve good schools or homes or doctors?

Jesus came to teach us many things about God and about the kind of human society God wanted to work with us to create. This gathering of children, along with those other times where he shut down the disciples' privilege, teach us that with God, no one is any better than anyone else. No one is loved more. No one is valued more. No one. We are only whole when we are one with God and one with each other. And each of us should treat everyone else with honor, respect, love and care. That theme is one of the central ideas in the Bible.

But we constantly make the Bible create privilege where none exists, just like the disciples did with Jesus. The first story we heard today, from Genesis, has often been interpreted to mean that male people were created first, and are therefore "better," and women created out of man and made to be his "helper." The old King James translation from over 400 years ago was "helpmeet." Oddly enough, the much older Hebrew word here is actually "companion," or "partner." The word carries no connotation of "less than." She is not created only to help. She is bone of bone and flesh of flesh, the same. Men are not better; women are not better; God loves and honors all, and expects love and honor from all, just the same.

Every time we come to this table, we can be reminded of this truth. Everyone is invited to share bread and juice here. No one has the privilege of going “first,” or having a bigger piece. As people all over the world go to tables like this, we need to remember that we don’t get more because we are Americans. People don’t get more because they are white or educated or rich. God does not recognize human privilege. God sees that each of us has a part to play, a gift to share, a love to give, and that each of us is created in the image of God, which means God must be utterly beautiful!

Look at the cover of your bulletin. In many parts of the world, people imagine that the table Jesus and his disciples sat at when they ate and drank together was round! At a round table, everyone has equal access to the food! No one is at the “head” of the table and so more important. No one has privileges over anyone else.

The most ancient prayers we have from a service of Communion pray that God would make us one as the wheat was gathered over many fields to make the bread and the grapes from many vines to make the wine. As the bread and juice were made from many different parts, and yet we see one loaf, one liquid, so we are now made one when we share them in Jesus’ name.

I am wheat and grape and child of God.

You are wheat and grape and child of God.

All over the world, flour of all kinds and fruit of all kinds and people of all kinds become one with us as Christ’s body. How could we want anything else to be the case? God did not make us to be alone, but gave us each other, to love and be loved by. With the help of God, can’t we try harder to make this so? Amen.