

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Living as Humble Little Children of the Father

BACKGROUND: Our Gospel and Epistle continue from Matthew and Romans. We are nearing the end of the church year, and the lessons are becoming strongly oriented to focussing on your salvation. Ezekiel was a prophet when Nebuchadnezzar sent his armies south to defeat Israel



and Egypt which was in Palestine to stop the rebellion against the Assyrians. Assyria defeated Israel and the Egyptian armies and took Ezekial and numerous Jews to Damascus. In Damascus Ezekial foretold that a time will come when Judah will be restored. But the Jewish community will need to correct their ways and trust in the Lord before their nation will be restored.

The Gospel is strange given Christ's teaching to them.. They wanted to know: Who is greatest in the kingdom Of heaven? Christ then set a child before them. In Jewish society, children were considered to immature to make any decisions. So Christ points to their trusting attitude, as what they needed to do to be worthy of the kingdom of heaven. So it is trust in God and Christ's redeeming act on the cross, that cleanses us of all sin. It's not who is doing the most actions on behalf of Christ that the disciples were thinking was making them #1 in God's site. We pray that we will always humbly recognize that

Christ recognizes Child as Greatest in Kingdom of Heaven it is God's Plan of Salvation that saves us eternally. .

THE LESSONS : Ezekiel 33:7–9, Romans 13:1–10, & Matthew 18:1–20

True greatness is not self-sufficient strength, but humility like that of a little child. The greatness of childlike faith receives all good things as gracious gifts from our Father in heaven. Apart from such faith, *"you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,"* but whoever is humbled like a little child will be *"the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 18:3–4). Though in our sin we deserve to be *"drowned in the depth of the sea"* (Matt. 18:6), we have instead been drowned ("buried") with Christ in Baptism and then raised to the new, humble life of a child of God. The Lord sends His watchman to warn us with a word from His mouth, in order that we may not die in our iniquity but be turned from our pride and selfishness to live (Ezek. 33:7–9). Thus, we live in humility and faith before God as well as in love for our neighbor, which *"is the fulfilling of the law"* (Rom. 13:10). In the reverent fear of God, we do no harm to our neighbor, but we *"pay to all what is owed to them"* (Rom. 13:7) and we *"owe no one anything, except to love each other"* (Rom. 13:8).