

Jeremiah 1:4-7, I am reading from the Common English Bible:

4 The Lord's word came to me:

5 "Before I created you in the womb I knew you;
before you were born I set you apart;
I made you a prophet to the nations."

6 "Ah, Lord God," I said, "I don't know how to speak
because I'm only a child."

7 The Lord responded,
"Don't say, 'I'm only a child.'
Where I send you, you must go;
what I tell you, you must say."

Mark 5: 35-43

35 While Jesus was still speaking with her, messengers came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer?"

36 But Jesus overheard their report and said to the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting." **37** He didn't allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John, James' brother. **38** They came to the synagogue leader's house, and he saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. **39** He went in and said to them, "What's all this commotion and crying about? The child isn't dead. She's only sleeping." **40** They laughed at him, but he threw them all out. Then, taking the child's parents and his disciples with him, he went to the room where the child was. **41** Taking her hand, he said to her, "*Talitha koum*," which means, "Young woman, get up." **42** Suddenly the young woman got up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. They were shocked! **43** He gave them strict orders that no one should know what had happened. Then he told them to give her something to eat.

This is the word of the Lord- Thanks be to God

In our New Testament scripture today, the leader of the synagogue has experienced the death of his daughter. While he was out, calling Jesus to the house, an unnamed woman complicated the travel plans. Immediately before the part we read today, we hear about a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. She stood among the crowd around Jesus, like the leader of the synagogue. As Jesus grew close to her position in the crowd, she reached out and touched the hem of his cloak. When Jesus felt his power leave as she was healed, he stopped and asked who touched him. The woman speaks up, and Jesus tells her she is healed because of her faith. After this she tells him her whole story. The thing is, a “whole story,” the whole truth, is a long story to tell.

After that event, Jesus and the disciples keep walking to the synagogue leader’s house. But again they are held up. Some people stop them and say that the girl is already dead. They mention that Jesus shouldn’t waste his time anymore.

Let’s take a moment to acknowledge how completely unhelpful these people are in this moment. They obviously can’t comprehend Jesus’ power because they state the obvious- “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” But they have underestimated Jesus - as is so often the case.

When Jesus gets to the synagogue leader’s house he says something a little odd for someone who has been told that a girl died. He says the girl is sleeping. She is not dead. The people laugh at Jesus. I’m not sure laughing at Jesus is the best plan here. If Jesus were to come up to my friends and family and said “don’t worry, this person isn’t dead, they are sleeping,” I for one, would be really happy to hear this news. Instead, the people laughed.

So Jesus kicks everyone out, and goes to the room where the girl is lying, and he simply says “little girl, get up.” She wakes up. He commands that someone get her a snack and immediately tells everyone else that they are not to tell what has happened. I like to think Jesus was letting this girl tell her own story - as if she was the one to share her own truth and her own story of faith. I wonder if Jesus might be setting a precedent here that we must follow: let the children tell the story of their faith.

In both our scriptures today, young people have been asked to share their own faith and story. In the Old Testament passage, Jeremiah himself says he is too young to speak. In response, God says that Jeremiah is completely qualified to speak. I like to think there is no one too young to speak what God has told. Because of their faith, our children have been called to speak their truth. I believe we are supposed to have the faith of children- full of questions, even though we already have answers to the questions that children ask. What would it look like if we told our stories of faith with the wonder and amazement that children show every day?

I was absolutely blessed to see the faith of children in action this week. As y'all know, this week, we had day camp here everyday. Some of the Fellowship staff were here hanging out with 8-12 campers each day, making sure they heard about the wonderful story of Jesus and felt the the joy of camp.

Every morning, we did Bible study before other activities. Our campers would sit in a circle and talk about the theme of the day. These themes were things like, "I am loved", "I am connected", "I am kind." Our campers were asked questions by our counselors about what it means to be these things. With their counselors and each other, these kids made connections between God's love for them and their daily lives. One of the days this week, we did arts and crafts and made bracelets for friends in the group. They learned how being kind to one another creates a stronger body of Christ and a family within the group. One day, we planted the flowers lining the steps outside. Through this, the campers learned that not only are we all connected, but we are also connected to God's earth and we are called to care for it.

On a different day, we had we invited the kids to stretch their imaginations and wonder with an activity we call Fairy House Building. This is when (as the name implies) you build a house for the fairies that live around you so they will stay warm and safe in the evening storms and during the night. Because you see, fairies travel a lot and if you build houses for them, they are able to sleep and rest before having to continue on their journeys. The campers really seemed to love this. They got so into building the perfect houses for the fairies.

I overheard campers ask the most amazing questions to their counselors and each other this week in between all the activities when they had the random thoughts any kid thinks of. Some of these were, "what started God, if God was before everything else?", "how big is God, if

God can hold us all?”, and finally, “do you think the fairies will like the house I’ve built for them?” I fear that these children have been told that they are too young to speak, by people who are in charge, just like Jeremiah. We can not embrace the faith of a child, if we never hear what their faith looks like to them.

When children experience the world, they are amazed, they wonder at things that don’t have answers. They don’t ask questions about the mathematics that hold the universe in place. They don’t ask questions about the exact scientific names of the bugs crawling around. They don’t ask about the exact pantone color of the grass. They ask where the fairies are. They ask how big God is. And they ask how we know God loves us. These are the questions that so clearly demonstrate the faith of a child. As we grow older, many of us lose the wonder we see so frequently in children. We forget how to have that kind of faith. As adults, we don’t wonder enough. Maybe this is because we suddenly have answers we have craved as children. Or maybe this is because when we get older, there are hard things that have to be dealt with, there may be less time to wonder about the outcomes.

I remember being in church every Sunday growing up. Ok... so it was most Sundays... I tended to throw tantrums that would land me outside in the car with my dad. But the sundays I was in church, I clearly remember learning the Gloria Patri. Since I couldn’t read, I was learning it only by what I heard other people saying. As I stood on the pew between my parents, I sang proudly what I had learned. “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be... off with her head... amen, amen.” Y’all, I was convinced. This made perfect sense to me. Everyone looked pretty solemn while we sang, no one seemed to be worried that these were the words, so I figured it was legitimate. When I finally learned how to read, I was shocked. When had they changed the words?! Suddenly, I had to learn what a “world without end” was, and while that seems better than “off with her head”, I was very confused.

When I was a child, I wondered why we would be saying “off with her head” during a song in church. But in this wonder, I figured it was just what God needed each week.

Children just assume that their experience is what God is. When the campers were asking questions this week, it wasn’t out of trying to stump the staff. They were not trying to

throw off the process of the week or anything like that. They were simply wondering about God. They were asking the questions that popped in their heads about our world, our God and all the things they wonder about.

We feel like we already know the answers to the questions. We know there is no such thing as Santa, as fairies, or as magic holding our world in it's spot. But kids see God's work, and they don't question why it works... they call it magic. And they trust that God is present and working even when they can't explain why. To have the faith of a child, we must set down our answers. We must stop looking for the answers to life's big questions so we can master them. And instead, wonder about them. We can take a moment to see the magic in the world, through the eyes of a child, and see that magic, as God's Holy Spirit working through every moment. To understand that to love God and to experience that love - is like sharing snacks with others, making new friends, and being together in community- just like the campers did this week.

To have the faith of a child is to accept that we see God's work everyday, in every moment. We shouldn't become preoccupied with our search for bigger answers. If you ask a child how big God is, they may answer "As big as a dinosaur," or they may answer, "well, God has to be the biggest thing. So maybe God is as big as the whole world." They see the magic in our Universe. And they call that magic God. If we look around, and really look for God in our lives, in our days, and in our communities, we will see the God-magic that the children already know is there.

Please pray with me-

Wonderful, and awesome God-

Thank you.

Thank you for providing children to us to show us the faith we should have.

Thank you for reminding us that your Spirit brings magic into our world. God, help us see you in our everyday moments. Help us find the childlike wonder that our faith needs. Keep us grounded in You, while we discover the ways you work in the world around us.

In your most holy name,

Amen