



I wonder what Jesus' followers thought when in the midst of their grumbling about who among them was the greatest, Jesus placed a child in their midst and said, *"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me"* (Mark 9). They had to have been scandalized. After all, in Jesus' day everyone knew that children were sub-human and expendable; not worthy of anyone's attention. Much to their amazement, Jesus' followers found out quickly that his definition of religious greatness included neither a resume nor a seminary degree.

I wonder what that child thought when Jesus declared her to be an emissary of God; a representative of the One who created the heavens and the earth. Surely, this man must be crazy. Everyone knows that children have no place at the table; that they are property to be exploited. I wonder if she was amazed, or was she scared as she pondered what consequences would follow for being equated with God.

I suppose Jesus could just as easily have brought a leper, a widow, or a demon-possessed graveyard dweller to the party; after all, these too were victims of a culture addicted to the drug of dehumanization. But he didn't do that. He brought a child. I wonder why.

Could it be that a child is by nature more trusting? More uninhibited? If you tell a young child that she is special and that she is loved by God no matter what, she will believe you. She will trust that you speak truth to her; no questions asked. If you tell a seasoned-adult the very same thing, he will probably recall all the skeletons in his closet and will easily come up with a hundred reasons why God couldn't possibly love him.

Many years ago, while serving as pastor on Grand Island, I helped lead a community-wide Vacation Bible School. On the closing day, I appeared in front of all the kids dressed up as Moses and led them in a rousing song of "Pharoah, Pharoah," complete with hand motions and dance steps. It was crazy and chaotic and lots of fun. Later that afternoon, while doing some grocery shopping at our local Tops Friendly Market, I heard a young voice rise up from behind me, "Look Mommy, it's the Pharoah Guy!" She then ran up to me and started singing and doing the Pharoah dance. Without even thinking about it, I joined in. What a strange site it must have been for folks to see that day. Our own little Flash Mob!

Here was a child who was so excited about the story of God freeing His people, that without giving it a thought, she just broke into song and dance right there in the cereal aisle. It was as if God himself was dancing in that aisle right in front of the Coco Puffs. When was the last time a God story caused you to break into song and dance at the grocery store? Sadly, I haven't done so since that day more than 20 years ago.

Maybe Jesus put a child in the midst of his followers to remind them (*and us*) of a couple of things:

1. Trust God's love with reckless abandon.
2. Shout God's love to the world with reckless abandon.
3. Dance with God in the cereal aisle with reckless abandon.

Peace and Love,
Pastor Doug