

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, 2025
SERMON: BOOGERS AND GOLDFISH CRACKERS
SCRIPTURE: MARK 10:13-16; MATTHEW 18:2-6
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MARK 10:13-16

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. **14** When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **15** Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” **16** And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

MATTHEW 18:1-6

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. **3** And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. **4** Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. **5** And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

6 “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Sermon: Boogers and Goldfish Crackers

I’ve been thinking a lot about children recently, because the subject of children has come up a LOT here at KCC this month! Our church family was recently blessed with Matt and Pie Pie’s adoption of baby Nora; I’ll be having a baby myself in another couple months; we’ve been blessed with the summer visit of Noah’s daughter Mya (who just left to return to her mother’s home in Colorado yesterday); and in general a *lot* of our worship focus has been on children over the last couple months.

We also have been hosting an intensive keiki drama camp here at the church for the last couple weeks, which culminated in a children’s theatre production of “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe” yesterday here in the sanctuary (which is why the stage still looks like Narnia and there may be a faint smell of popcorn and sugar in the air). The theme of this summer at KCC has largely been babies and children indeed!

It sounds awesome – all this new life and joy of children. Children are the future, children are God’s gift, etc, we say all these platitudes to talk about kids. But here’s the thing, and I say this as a grateful mother of 2 ½ kids – kids are a *huge pain*.

The church is a mess. Our fellowship hall is covered in cardboard scraps and paint. There's probably ground bits of goldfish crackers that are permanently embedded into our carpet in the sanctuary. All of us are a little bit sick from their runny noses and greasy hands making constant contact with us and each other. The halls are reverberating echoes of ridiculous complaints such as "TEEEACCCCHHERRR so-and-so called me a booger butt!" or questions that we're not quite sure how to answer like "Pastor Irene: do trees poop out air and, if so, where from?" Yes that's right I just used the words "butt," "booger," and "poop" in a sermon because, well, *that's what it's like being around kids*. Our interns aren't here today because those 30 kids at camp for the last two weeks straight wore them out – and they're all in their early 20s! If kids can break down a 20 year old that fast, how much more difficult is it for those of us older folks to *actually* enjoy being around kids? I mean, let's be honest – do any of us really like kids, or we just like the idea of them?

The Atlantic put out an article a few years ago called "What Becoming a Parent Really Does to Your Happiness."* The author did a data study on parental responses and found that people who become parents routinely report lower marital satisfaction that never really recovers, even after the children leave the house; parents report lower productivity at work; strained relationships with friends and colleagues; poor maintenance of self care; and extreme negative impact on finances. In summary, becoming a parent has *undesirable results* on the typical factors that we measure happiness upon. Sounds awful, to be honest, becoming a parent.

Jesus' disciples recognized how gross, difficult, and burdensome children can be and accordingly attempted to keep parents away from Jesus that were coming to have Him bless their kids. We disciples do that same thing to our pastors – Senior Pastors are almost *never* tasked with children's ministry in the portfolio because they, like Jesus, are seen as "above" the mundane details of boogers and goldfish crackers and tree poop. We tend to outsource children's ministry tasks to interns or volunteers as a side project – or worse, as a "damage control" measure to stop kids from ruining worship by putting them *somewhere else* – rather than the central vision of what a church should be.

Yet, in the Book of Mark, Jesus rebukes the disciples for turning the parents away. He even goes so far as to say that children are *the most important people* in the Kingdom of Heaven, and anyone who causes a child to stumble should *drown themselves*.

Yikes! That's a pretty extreme difference between keeping our churches, our pastors, and Jesus sanitized from the smelly, sticky, loud reality of children. Instead of pushing kids away, Jesus is asking us to not only centralize them, but to *become like them*. And if we don't do that, Jesus says, we might as well be dead!

Sounds important. So what does it mean to become like little children?

It doesn't mean becoming sweet or innocent or simple. Honestly, anyone who has spent more than 15 minutes with kids knows those aren't always accurate descriptors. What it *does* mean is recovering a sense of **purpose**.

Children, for all their noise and chaos and mess, are some of the most purposeful people you'll ever meet. They do things on purpose. They feel things on purpose. They ask questions because they *want to know*. They create because they *need to express*. They love because they *mean it*.

At drama camp this week, I saw this over and over again. During a morning devotional, which the kids engaged with daily over different topics involved in the theatre production, one camper asked, "How does Jesus or Aslan dying actually save us? That doesn't make sense to me." That child didn't just blindly accept such an odd concept – she wanted to know more. Something about that story tugged at her spirit—she was making the connection, and it *mattered* to her. She didn't take for granted that Jesus died for her sins, or Aslan died for Edmund's in the play**; she wanted to know the exact mechanics of how that worked.

Another child came up to one of the interns and said, "I'm nervous to go on stage, but you're teaching us how to be brave and I think I can do that." He wasn't doing the play because it was just something to do this week; he wanted to do it to engage a purposeful call to bravery that he felt instilled in his little boy heart. Purpose. Not performance. Purpose.

One kid, who had a tough time all week staying focused, spent *days* during set design painstakingly painting a box that was eventually meant to be Mrs. Beaver's fireplace—yes, just a box—because in their mind, that box was important to the story. They had a role to play in making something holy, and they took it seriously.

Children aren't thinking about the boogers hanging out their noses or the goldfish crackers they're smashing under foot because they're distracted by all the *purpose* around them, from how trees produce oxygen to how Jesus died to save our sins and what that has to do with them.

Children don't make us happier in the ways we usually measure it: with clean houses, quiet rooms, balanced budgets, bountiful date nights and adult social functions, or efficient calendars. But they *do* make us look at the *purpose* of things, constantly and always. They slow us down. They raise our temperature. They shake loose the false comfort of our routines. And in all of that, they return us to the core of what it means to be alive in Christ: to *engage life on purpose*.

Jesus didn't ask us to tolerate children. He asked us to learn from them. To re-center ourselves around their energy, their questions, their love, their grief, and their wild, creative chaos—not because it's cute, but because it's Kingdom.

So, church family, whether you're a parent, a grandparent, a tired intern, or just someone trying to survive the boogers and the goldfish crumbs—don't mistake the

mess for a burden. It's the path. It's the invitation. It's the way back to our own holy purpose.

Let the little children come. And may we come with them, and walk with them in purpose.

Amen.