

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 1

For 28 Feb 2010

Dear Friends

One of the cards I received on my recent birthday had a photo from the wonderful three-volume series of international photos called MILK, ie Moments of Intimacy, Laughter and Kinship. This particular photo was a toddler barely at the walking stage, but certainly at the exploring stage. It's a rear view and the child is bent over with his head on the floor. He's looking at the world from between his short stubby legs. Its cute. What surprised me was when I turned the picture upside down. Another dimension leapt into focus. The little face was wide-eyed with a mixture of surprise and wonder. His mouth had pursed lips as if he was exclaiming an astonished "Oooh!". The quote on the card read "Seek the wisdom of the ages but look at the world through the eyes of a child. Now that seems good advice. How to do it is the tricky bit. How do we continue to see the world with fresh child-like wonder and excitement? I suspect the short answer has to do with how adult and rigid we had become. Has the inner child dried up? How do we keep nourishing the freshness of our inner being?"

Over the years I have been constantly drawn back to Jesus' words about "unless you become like a child" the Kingdom is beyond your reach. And now here I am almost too old to remember how old I am and I'm still intrigued by what Jesus meant. If you want to look at the key sayings here they are: Matt 18:3; Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17. As I considered what Jesus may have been hinting at I have tended to try and select the quality or qualities children have which give them such ready access into the Kingdom. Over the centuries writers, theologians, commentators, preachers and teachers have tried to do the same. The results are interesting. The qualities most frequently listed are humility, innocence, trust, obedience, absence of calculation, and children's vulnerability. So you take your pick. Some of them so idealise children they no longer seem true to the children playing in a pre-school sandpit. Maybe it isn't about the qualities of a child. So I went to see what one thoughtful writer, Hans-Rued Weber, says in his book "Jesus and the Children" - written in 1979. I wasn't disappointed.

Sincerely - Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 1 March:	79:8,9,12,14	Dan 9:4-10	Luke 6:36-38
Tuesday 2 March:	50:8,6-24	Isa 1:10,16-20	Matt 23:1-12
Wednesday 3 March:	31:4,5,14-18	Jer 18:18-20	Matt 20:17-28
Thursday 4 March:	1	Jer 17:5-10	Luke 16:19-31
Friday 5 March: (World Day of Prayer)	105:16-22	Gen 37:3,4,12,13, 17-28	Matt 21:33-43, 45-46
Saturday 6 March:	103:1-4,9-12	Micah 7:4-15,18-20	Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Sunday 7 March **Lent 3**

Ps 63:1-8; Isa 55:1-9; 1 Cor 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 8 March:	42:1-2; 43:1-4	2 Kings 5:1-15	Luke 4:24-30
Tuesday 9 March:	25:3-10	Dan 2:20-23	Matt 18:21-25
Wednesday 10 March:	147:13-end	Deut 4:1,5-9	Matt 5:17-19
Thursday 11 March:	95:1,2,6-end	Jer 7:23-28	Luke 11:14-23
Friday 12 March:	81:6-10,13,16	Hosea 14:2-10	Mark 12:28-34
Saturday 13 March:	51:1,2,17-end	Hosea 5:15-6:6	Luke 18:9-14

Sunday 14 March **Lent 4**

Ps 32; Josh 5:9-12; 2 Cor 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3,11-32

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 15 March:	30:1-5,8, 11-12	Isa 65:17-21	John 4:43-54
Tuesday 16 March:	46:1-8	Ezek 47:1-9,12	John 5:1-3,5-16
Wednesday 17 March:	145:8-17	Isa 49:8-15	John 5:17-30
Thursday 18 March:	106:19-23	Exod 32:7-14	John 5:31-47
Friday 19 March:	34:15-end	Jer 26:8-11	John 7:1-2,10, 25-30
Saturday 20 March:	7:1-2,8-10	Jer 11:18-20	John 7:40-52

Sunday 21 March **Lent 5**

Ps 126 or 119:9-16; Isa 43:16-21; Phil 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

Some forty years ago Hans-Rued Weber was Director of Biblical Studies for the World Council of Churches. He visited NZ in the late 1970's and conducted a series of Biblical workshops. His approach was a breath of fresh air.

Metaphors

In his slender book on “Jesus and the Children” he alerts us to the fact that much of Jesus’ teaching is given in metaphors. We are familiar with simile—as in “when he runs he is a deer”. He goes on to say that a metaphor startles the imagination. It does so because it brings together two elements we are surprised to find together. In this case it brings children into the very heart of the profound issue of the Kingdom of God—or if you like it places children at the very heart of things profound and eternal. Now normally such deeply divine issues are trampled over by serious adults, clever students, elderly scholars, Christian theologians and people who revel in left-brained logical reasoning. Jesus shifts the focus to inarticulate children and we get tipped out of the familiar attitudes we hold. Our usual pattern of thinking is undermined and broken up.

Implications—A few starters!

- Jesus was constantly opening up fresh visions of what is truly real (namely what is everlasting and constantly real). He did it by making ordinary familiar things such as seeds, yeast and cups of cold water, and by telling stories such as children arguing over how to play their games, and guests arriving late to the wedding party, so that these slices of daily life became images that reflect the profound and ultimate spiritual realities.
- This approach means we can seldom, if ever, begin to explain the significance of his metaphor by saying: “The whole point of this story is ...”. The stories do not define. They evoke. We have to allow ourselves to be involved in the fresh combination of images, as in this incident. Forget for a moment about adults and the Kingdom and allow ourselves to be participants in the adventure of children just expecting the ongoing love and life that flows at the heart of the universe.
- When stories and parables are used as metaphors they make more open-ended options and meanings. Usually more than we expect and often more than we want. We often resist the variety on offer because we tend to like clear definitions and concise conclusions. After all, they are much easier to carry around in our pockets giving us the illusion of ‘having the final answer’. It takes more reflection, patience and openness to live with the images and allow them to speak to us when we are ready and able to hear, and most of all when we are ready to live the image.

WELCOME TO SHALOM 2010

- * Hopefully we’ll be able to keep them flowing towards you on a 2-weekly pattern.
- * The desire to underline the broad and rich meaning of “SHALOM” is as strong as ever, so expect themes on Wholeness, Peace, Inner Unity, Oneness of the Universe, the Centrality of the Christ Consciousness and our Cosmic Context—plus other developing, expanding areas.
- * We are glad to provide the lectionary of daily readings, so when the rest doesn’t grab you then the Biblical material provides plenty of alternatives.

Re Costs and Administration:

We are keeping the cost at \$5.00 per year.

- (a) Hand it to your local congregational rep.; or
- (b) Drop it in to the HCUC office at St Mark’s, Woburn Road; or
- (c) Post it to the HCUC Office—PO Box 30 529, Lower Hutt

If it is posted to you then an additional amount of at least \$10 would be very welcome.

So thanks in anticipation and welcome to a year of Shalom.

From Lester and the production team.