

Sermons from West Denmark



West Denmark Lutheran Church Luck, Wisconsin westdenmark.org

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 5, 2026

By Terra Lumley, *inspired by the Holy Spirit*

[Matthew 11:16-20, 25-30](#)

I'm going to start by just summarizing what is going on in Matthew Chapter 11 to set the stage for today's reading.

Jesus has healed many, instructs his disciples, he starts to instruct the crowds. He has identified John as a prophet. By verse 16.

I imagine the humanity of Jesus in this scenario, where he's done all these things, and he is probably tired, and maybe getting frustrated by verse 16 when he asks what to do with this generation who just aren't satisfied. I imagine him like a frustrated mother who talks to the air, "What to do with this generation!"

Don't you know people like this, the ones who are never quite happy? Like when you ask someone, "How was your vacation to Spain?" They reply, "Hot!"

Or, for those of you who have seen the movie "Inside Out 2," with the teenager emotion Ennui, which means boredom. Nothing can impress them. I remember taking the kids to Sequoia National Forest about 7 years ago and Maya was like, "They're just big trees, what's the big deal?"

Then, like Lutherans would, we skip the verses where Jesus reproaches the cities in which he has been healing and teaching who refused to repent.

And we move on to the verses where Jesus thanks God for hiding **these things** from the wise and revealing them to children. He then reassures us that those who are weary can come to him and have rest for their souls.

Sound theology will tell you that this passage, like many others in the New Testament, have to do with Gospel over law. The first century Jews of the time were under a tremendous burden to try to comply with purity laws, and Jesus is telling people that they were missing the whole point.

It's like when Al tells you that the High Church is missing the point with all of this ritual. You just have to follow Jesus, live like Jesus. You know, keep it simple!

Jesus is telling people that his way is simple and right. He uses the imagery of God revealing to little children, spiritual truths, and hiding it from the wise pharisees and scribes.

There are other recurring themes that are repeated in this text as well. The theme that God's kingdom upends human social structure of power, like when the first shall be last and so on. Children of this time had the social status just barely above that of slaves. So we the reader are to understand the power contrast on display here. Those who are the wisest in society fail to see these spiritual gifts, yet little children get it. It has traditionally been seen as a metaphor for receiving God with humility and dependency. The contrast in this gospel is that the Pharisees, who depended on their own understanding were blinded to the truth, while those who approach God with unspoiled minds, rely totally on God to provide and guide them.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has a rigorous process for ordination and I value that because I believe that they move from a place of integrity, ensuring that people in the pulpit are educated in scripture and doctrine and therefore are responsibly preaching the Gospel. That being said, I am not ordained and therefore under no such obligation.

I think for this congregation, all of this traditional understanding of this text is like kindergarten Christian theology, so I want to talk about something bigger: the **spiritual truths** that Jesus was referring to when he said, "**these things**" have been revealed to little children and hidden from the wise.

In this chapter of Matthew's Gospel, I believe **these things** refer to true spiritual understanding; a matter of the heart, not intellectual capability, which is revealed through humility, receptivity, and surrender.

One cannot think their way into God's kingdom.

This spiritual truth, that God's kingdom is not a physical territory, is an eternal reality that the dominion of God is in the hearts of individuals who have experienced a divine transformation and a radically inverted value system. You know you are there when you have peace, righteousness, and joy. You feel interconnected and feel the transformative power of Love.

And, what if Jesus meant it when he said that little children really hold the understanding, and we the older, wiser miss the point?

Let's start with **these things**, these spiritual truths.

I dug into the attributes of children, from a developmental stand point, and this is what I found. An article titled, "The Natural Genius of a Child," from the American Institute for Learning and Development. Here is what they had to say: children are...

Dependent and vulnerable;

Resilient, flexible'

Emotionally sensitive and expressive;

Trusting;

Desire connection;

Vivid imagination, creative, inventiveness;

Full of vitality, playful;

Curious, possess a sense of wonder.

According to this article, there are cultural forces that dampen these traits. They are poverty, trauma, depression, anxiety, rigid ideologies, and pressure to grow up.

I came across this quote, “We rush them through childhood like there is some place better to be. There’s not.” If Jesus were to reproach us today, it would be because of this!

So the question is, how do we adults continue to foster these spiritual gifts, both in our children, and for ourselves?

Psychologists suggest that you create a climate free of criticism, accept differences, and participate in something that creates wonder. Most of you have just participated in Family Camp, and you were witness to these practices in action! We all watched the kids run, play and create. It brings us joy to just watch the kids. They have got it going on! Of course there are activities for young and old at Family Camp that stimulate us and bring us joy. Who knew that God’s Kingdom had something to do with folk dancing and kazoos?

I’m going to do something weird. I’m going to ask you to turn to someone next to you and share with them a thing that brought you joy at camp this year. Then we’ll come back together and I’ll finish up.

Is it possible that Jesus really meant that spiritual gifts, and the revelation of God’s Kingdom, were revealed to little children? I’m going to argue YES.

I’m going to share what Richard Rohr, my Homi, teaches about this very thing.

He says that if nothing invokes awe in you, then you don’t know Christ. We can watch children, and when they are young, most things inspire awe in them.

I remember when Elodie was not yet walking, and they discovered a wheel on their stroller. That kid sat there staring at that wheel and moved it back and forth for 20 minutes. Bubbles. Most kids can play with bubbles for hours and not tire of it. They will be just as excited the next time they are playing with bubbles.

As an adult, what invokes awe for us? Why is it important? If you were at Camp and heard Dave’s one-minute talk on awe, then you know why it is important for your mental health. If not, I’ll briefly state that it enhances your sense of meaning and shifts your focus from yourself to that of others which deepens connections

and reduces anxiety. Talk to Dave for more information on the health benefits of awe.

But why is important to God? Rohr says, "To be in awe, is to have respect and reverence. If you have no respect or reverence for anything, then nothing is sacred. When nothing is sacred, then it is all for the taking, and we have failed to see God in creation." Instead, we should observe the little things because they reveal the multitude of creation, and there is where you will find God. The spiritual world manifests itself in the physical world and when you honor the divine presence of God everywhere."

When you can be in awe of a rock in the field, then you are ready to see Christ. When you can lose yourself in awe by laying in the grass and looking at the clouds move, then you have taken up the yolk of Christ. If you still play with bubbles, then you know joy. When you have accomplished this, you have the natural wisdom of a child, and God's kingdom is revealed to you.

In the spirit of playfulness, Karl Wicklund will lead us in a sing along of "All God's Critters." He will sing the verses, we will join him in the chorus.