



Today's Lesson

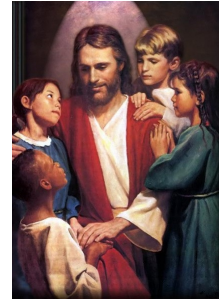
**Living in Process:
Heaven's Gift**

Power Point notes available at:
www.unityofbakersfield.org

Living in Process: Heaven's Gift

And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them.

But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."



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"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

All three writers, Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; and Luke 18:16 make a point to expound on this teaching from Jesus.

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When pressed by the Pharisees to explain about the kingdom, Jesus responded, "*The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.*" Luke 17:20-21

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Unity co-founder, Charles Fillmore had this to say about the idea of heaven:

Heaven is a state of consciousness in harmony with the thoughts of God. It is everywhere present as the orderly, lawful adjustment of God's kingdom in mind, body, and affairs through an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving.

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Julie loved looking out her window into the night shy before she went to bed. When her mom came in to wish her a good night she noticed Julie deep in thought and asked, "What are you thinking dear?"

Julie looked at her mother and said, "Mom, if our side of heaven looks like this, I wonder what God's side looks like."

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Throughout the ages many a sage, philosopher, religious scholar and institutions have tried to explain what heaven might look like from God's side, what is heaven's gift?



That inexhaustible good-nature which is the most precious gift of Heaven, spreading itself like oil over the troubled sea of thought, and keeping the mind smooth and equable in the roughest weather.

(Washington Irving)

izquotes.com

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It has been found that people who exhibit a good nature quality in their daily lives are people who tend to express an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving.

This morning we sang the hymn "Now Are the Showers of Blessings" and in the refrain we sang these words: "*Now is the time of expressing bountiful gifts from above..Windows of heaven are open, showers of blessings outpour:*"

If our eyes are said to be the windows to our soul then our hearts are the windows to heaven. Jesus proved this time and time again when he prayed.

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In John 11:41-42 Jesus is preparing to raise Lazarus from the dead and what does he do? He gives thanks first to the one source, one power, one activity present and available in all situations - God. With a very simple two line prayer, He set the "miracle" into motion: "***Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you hear me always.***"

With these words of thankfulness coming from the very heart of his being, the "miracle" was set into motion.

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In their book, The Quest, Richard and Mary-Alice Jafolla show us how a grateful heart opens the windows of heaven:

Thanksgiving isn't just words. Jesus' words represented the feelings in His heart. His thanksgiving was a verbal description of feelings He had for God. In thanking God, He was acknowledging that God's desire for Him and for Lazarus was only good. The feeling of thanksgiving is an emotion, a visceral reaction, and not an idea.

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We can intellectualize about all of the things we have in our lives for which to be grateful. We can make lists, long lists, of the innumerable reasons we should give thanks. This is good, because it helps us realize just how extremely blessed we are. We all have something, many things, for which to give thanks.

Still the lists, the realizations, the words, are not enough. They are only helpful if they lead us into that feeling of thanksgiving. We need the feeling, the inner fullness of a grateful heart in order to tap that power within us, to open the windows of heaven.

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Strong emotions will overpower an intellectual idea virtually every time. Feelings activate the powers which make the changes and do the work. Feelings are the catalyst and the sustaining fuel of our actions. When feelings cease, action ceases. In fact, you would not even continue walking across a room if you didn't feel like doing it.

It is your responsibility, then, to ignite the feeling of thanksgiving in yourself. It is nothing anyone can give you, or anything you can take in from the outside of yourself.

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While you may be feeling ungrateful because of a present challenge, deep within you are the embers of thanksgiving, waiting to be fanned into a full blaze. With enough fanning, an attitude of gratitude will easily become a habit.

Someone once said, "If you are having trouble developing a consciousness of thankfulness try being thankful for what you don't have in your life."

A Sunday School teacher asked her class to make a list of what they were thankful for.

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One little boy wrote down that he was thankful for his glasses. The teacher was very impressed by that. Some children resent wearing glasses. Here, however, was a young boy mature enough to appreciate what wearing glasses did for him.

"Johnny," she said, "I see that you put your glasses down at the head of the list of things for which you are thankful. Is there any special reason?" Johnny answered. "Yes, Ms Thomas. My glasses keep the boys from hitting me and the girls from kissing me."

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People give and receive gifts as a symbol of their attitude of gratitude for the blessings they have received. The gift of thankfulness must be shared so that it can bless others. It's paramount to letting one's light shine for all to see.

I'd like to close with this story from James Hewett:

I was visiting an elderly woman recently. While there she asked me to get a box of letters from her dresser.

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As I was getting the letters, I saw a beautiful quilt in the drawer. When I asked about the quilt she said I could take it out and look at it. What a masterpiece it was! She told me her grandmother had made the quilt as a wedding gift years before. When I asked her why she did not have it on her bed, she said, "Oh, it's too beautiful to use." I thought it sad that she felt her gift was better hidden in a drawer--preserved--rather than used.

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As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

- John Fitzgerald Kennedy.



Share who you are with the world, for your special gift of presence is a blessing to many around you.