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Bishop of Broken Bay

Message for BBNeighbourhoods 7 July 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Evangelist Matthew describes a simple, but powerful encounter between Jesus, little children, their parents and carers, and Jesus' disciples ([Matthew 19:13-14](#)). Matthew tells us that the children were being brought to Jesus so that he might lay hands on them and pray. It is a beautiful, intimate and pure moment of communion. In that moment of encounter with Jesus the wellbeing of the children is paramount. With Jesus, the children are happy, healthy, and holy. They are safe. Meanwhile, the disciples and those who brought the children to Jesus are caught up in an altercation. It seems that their daily schedule had not provided space for this meeting. Maybe the structure of the timetable did not allow for spontaneous moments or the needs of others. Whatever the case, Jesus intervenes saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them". This is clearly a God moment, and the disciples cannot quite see it.

In the Gospel according to Mark, the Evangelist reports the episode of the blind man of Jericho named Bartimæus ([Mark 10:46-52](#)). Sitting by the side of the road, this person was both blind and a beggar. He is alone and looking for compassion. At one level, he desires human companionship, because on his own he is vulnerable and isolated. At the same time, this person desires healing and he asks for mercy. It is tempting to think that the healing he desires is outward looking, that is, his eyesight. However, his vulnerability is also inward looking. Bartimæus shouts out to Jesus because he seeks inner healing and spiritual well-being. In sum, this vulnerable person realises that Jesus will understand him and suffer with him, which is the deepest sign of compassion and mercy. In that moment when Jesus calls Bartimæus, they become one. In that moment, we have a glimpse of Jesus suffering on the cross for the salvation of all.

These two passages from the New Testament are a powerful reminder of how the business of discipleship can sometimes distract us from the true purpose of following Jesus. The busyness of activism can reduce the Christian life to a series of meetings, debates, and endless conversations about strategy and process. The mindfulness of belonging to Jesus, of being present in and through him, and of being sent on mission to proclaim Christ to the world, primarily by a life of witness to the Good News, can often be missing.

As the community of the Church of Broken Bay, we can never risk being so caught up in this kind of bureaucracy. The two examples from the Scriptures above are powerful reminders of how Jesus cares for children and vulnerable people. The safety and well-being of all people in the community of the Church and beyond is part of who we are as disciples of Jesus. Likewise, the conviction that all people in the community must be respected and cared for will inform and direct what we do as we live out our Christian vocation.



Beginning with my own ministry as your bishop, I hope that the determination to live the Gospel is something that each of us will commit to. In this way, we will be faithful to Christ who respected, protected, and cared for the children, the vulnerable, and indeed all people.

Peace be with you,

+Anthony