



Wednesday Prayer

17th Sunday after Pentecost – Who is the greatest?

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” Mark 9:33-37

Who among us wants to be last? We work hard to become the best at what we do, whether that's in our work, in raising our children, or even in the lawn that we keep. Some of these are clearly more important than others, and still, if we're competing to be better than another, Jesus is telling us we're completely missing the mark. He raises children up in this context for the disciples, as they represent the vulnerable, with no status, rights or legal protection. Jesus embraces this vulnerability and raises them up as the greatest among us.

[Jerry Tello](#), author, trainer, and international speaker in family strengthening, therapeutic healing, and cross-cultural issues, shares four core questions children are born with:

- 1) Am I welcomed?
- 2) Am I valued?
- 3) Who and what am I connected to?
- 4) Am I loved?

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is redirecting the disciples to the core of welcoming, valuing and loving those considered least in society. He is always connecting himself to the most vulnerable, much to the irritation and uncertainty of the disciples. When I think of the questions raised by Jerry Tello above, I think of *all* children and their need to feel welcome, valued, connected and loved. It's easy to do this with my own children and those of my friends and church community. And then I broaden this to include young people who may get caught up in systems of exploitation. These are our most vulnerable, who have often come in last in our society. I am praying to understand better how to be welcoming, valuing and loving to all young people in our communities, and I hope you will join me.

Dear welcoming Jesus, you challenge us to put aside our own desire to be the greatest. Help us to follow your example to see the vulnerable and act as servant leaders to raise up those who have been considered least. We pray for vulnerable children and youth who are targeted by exploiters, that our love and care may fill any voids for connection and true welcome. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director, and community advocate for racial justice.