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# The "Child" Remembers

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**Text: Matthew 18:1-6**

[Our message today is taken from a scroll in a Jerusalem museum. Scholars believe it was written about A.D. 80.]

I am a very old man now. So many people have asked me to write down the story of my big day when Jesus used me as a parable of the Kingdom that I feel it is time to write my story down, before my eyes become too dim to see to write. It is strange to think that my main claim to fame is that which dates back to my childhood when I was about six years old, when Jesus used me as part of a lesson he was teaching on the Kingdom.

Those were exciting days in my house. Upsetting too, yes! My father, Peter (they called him the Big Fisherman), had been so changed by coming in contact with Jesus. Our family's whole life direction was turned around. Before Jesus came teaching and preaching and calling people to a new life, ours was just an ordinary fisherman's family. Father plied his trade on the Sea of Galilee. It was very hard work. I can remember what a treat it would be for me on those special days when the lake was calm, when father would awaken me before daylight to go out in the boat with him. I wasn't big enough to help, but he wanted me to share this experience with him and come to love the work on the boats as much as he did.

It always made me proud to be Peter's son; he was well-liked by the other fisher folk. They called him a born leader. He was big and strong and had powerful muscles. Yes, you probably have heard that he was impulsive, a mixture of mystic and mud, loyal and capable of betrayal all in one hour. You know that if

you have paid any attention to some of the stories circulating in Palestine, some of which are being written down into books called "Gospels". Yes, father had the whole gamut of human possibilities and short-comings. He was a lot like you and a lot like me.

But about that special day in my life which so many have heard about and asked about. It was a beautiful clear day in Galilee, the kind bright with sunshine, blue skies and the occasional puff of fluffy clouds, the kind that makes a child just know that something exciting will happen that day. Jesus was with his friends, the ones now come to be called his disciples. Then, of course, when I was a boy, I knew several of them as part of father's fishing community. James and John, sons of Zebedee and Uncle Andrew, father's brother, and some others they had met along their travels. Mother had packed us both a lunch so we would not miss out on this opportunity to be with Jesus. He had been in our house more than once, of course, and even made my grandmother well once when she was seriously ill with a fever.

Well, anyway, the subject of the Kingdom came up. It was an idea I knew nothing about at that age. Since then I have often reflected on the meaning of the Kingdom. I know something about how important it was, and is, to Jesus, and how his whole mission was tied up with our understanding of what he meant by the Kingdom. It was hard to put into words then. It is now and it probably will be 2,000 years from now. Jesus did not always depend on words though; he used things at hand, sparrows and lilies and sheep and coins.

And so, when this Kingdom business came up, he turned to me as an example. I was lifted up and put in the center of all those grownups, my father's friends and also lots of strangers. And Jesus pointed to ME and said: "This is the truth, I tell you, unless you turn and become as children, you will not enter the Kingdom!"

You can imagine how I felt! I was scared, almost ready to cry with all those grownups staring at me, but you know Jesus took me in his arms then and sat me on his knee. Oh, it's not often you find a teacher like that, who right in the midst of an important explanation, will take time to reassure a youngster who has just been a bit frightened. That tells you something about our Master, as we have since come to know

Jesus. Sensitive, nurturing, and able to act on that impulse to care, no matter how unusual it might appear to onlookers.

That's my story about that day. Was the lesson learned? Have the people caught the vision Jesus was after of becoming like a little child? Those are questions I've often asked myself. I think of a child's good qualities. Mind you, they aren't all little saints, but the things I think of are a sense of trust, a sense of wonder and awe, a willingness to try new things, an energy and a zest for life. And I wonder how many have heard that message and turned. I wonder if it is too hard for them to break out of old ruts, to welcome each new day with zest, to respond in openness to people's needs, to care and not to count the cost.

Will people who hear this Word several centuries from now be able to respond in love to this message of the Master? If they do, the Kingdom will break through right here and now. That is the core of the message! They will be able to recognize it because they are living in the Kingdom. Their hearts will be enlivened by the Holy Spirit, they will perceive God at work in their lives every day; they will truly hear the Word for themselves and lead the abundant life of service to others, even to the whole world.