

This summer, Katie, our four-year old, is ~~learning~~ learning to swim. ~~She~~ ~~is~~ ~~so~~ ~~proud~~ ~~of~~ ~~herself~~, over and over again she wants to show Dad how she can do it. She doesn't go far, three or four feet before she stops and stands in the shallow water. But she's learning.

Last winter it was different with Katie. Sue and I would try to talk her into relaxing in the water, letting it support her. But Katie would not let go of something solid. My arms, my neck, the side of the pool these were Katie's security, her safety she knew that as long as she hung on tight to these she would never sink. Of course she would never swim either.

But now through the work of the instructors at the pool, Katie is letting go more and more and learning about the joy of swimming.

I remember my first experience at summer camp. My folks signed me up for the 4-11 camp out on Kelly's Island, an island in Lake Erie. We went to Sandusky down to the docks, my ~~sleeping bag and~~ suitcase in hand I boarded the ship named the Challenger for the ten mile ride over the water to Kelly's. I can still remember fighting back the tears, wishing I could stay safe at home rather than be off with all these strangers. I remember the walk to the camp in the hot sun, the trouble sleeping that night, the super week that I had. Because my folks forced me to let go of them for a week, a whole new world opened up for me.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Come on in, Jesus says, the door is open, the water's fine. Let go, learn to swim in my Father's water. He will hold you up, in his water you will know a joy and a freedom you have never known before. Take the chance, let go, ~~let go,~~

Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

~~xxxxxxx~~

Sell your possessions and give alms.

Everyone wants to swim, but some never learn, Some remain always clinging to what is solid, afraid.

Everyone wants the kingdom. We want to be immersed in God's love. We want a calm peace that keeps us floating rather than sinking. We want the freshness and joy and being alive that comes with God's care. We want the freedom from all these things that entrap us and control us. But when Jesus says, Sell your possession and give alms I feel myself scrambling to grab hold of the side. I want something solid, something I can count on, money, possessions.

I used to be surprised that Jesus didn't spend more time talking about the needs. ~~xxxxxxx~~ That's the way we do it. You have a lot, the hungry have nothing, give some of your's to them.

Our church building is in need of repair, you have money, we need it for the building, please give.

But most of the time Jesus did not talk about hungry people, or institutions that needed people's support. Rather he seemed to be talking about the needs of those who had. About their need to let go, to step into the water.

Sell your possessions, give alms, provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old.

Joy and peace and love and freedom, these God freely offers on his island, called the kingdom. God even provides the ship, the transportation to get there. But the boy can't go to camp if he won't leave home. If I had not been willing to let go of the treasure that was home, I would have lost that camp experience that I still remember and treasure.

All this comes together in that word we call faith.

It takes a kind of faith, a trust to let go of ~~xxxxxxx~~ of the side and to find that your body floats. It takes faith to leave behind what I know for sure and to take a chance on an island I've never been to before.



So Jesus calls us to faith. He says, for you I have something better in store, the Father's kingdom, a treasure in the heavens to be yours, now, already. Let go, the Father's hands will hold you, let go and you will find it is in the Father's hands that you have belonged all along.

Lately I've been thinking about this organism we call the church. Jesus does not only make this invitation to us as individuals but to us as the body of Christ. Let go is Jesus word to us, the church, to us, Mettinger Lutheran Congregation. Don't let bank accounts and buildings and attendance figures run your life together, let go, receive the joy and peace and freedom that I have prepared for you in giving yourselves, as a church, for others.

I think of the last few weeks. Women serving lunches and meals after funerals. People taking time from their own busy lives to be with the grieving, people caring about people. Next to this, raising money for the church is very insignificant.

Fear not little Flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

~~Let's be jumping in the water together. Jesus says the water's fine.~~

Amen.