

# WALKING AND WORKING TOGETHER IN HOPE

Mary Ann Pastuck  
Camrose United Church  
2004, November 21

Children have a unique perspective on God, a perspective that we all could use. You can see this clearly in the way they talk to God. On issues of doctrine and Scripture: “Dear God, I read the Bible. What does *begat* mean? Nobody will tell me.” “How did you know you were God?” “Dear God, are you really invisible or is that just a trick?” “Dear God, I would like to know why all the things you said are in red.”

Or questions of a little less eternal significance: “Dear God, who draws the lines around the countries?” “Dear God, I am a Canadian. What are you? There are always the honest statements of life in general, this one we have probably heard before: “Thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for is a puppy.” “Why is Sunday school on Sunday? I thought it was supposed to be a day of rest.” “Dear God, if we come back as something please don’t let me be Jennifer Horton because I really don’t like her.”

And of course no one can give praise and thanks like a child: “I think the stapler is one your greatest inventions.” “Dear God, I don’t ever feel alone since I found out about you.” “Dear God, I don’t think anybody could be a better God. Well, I just wanted you to know, I am not saying that because you are God.” Dear God, I didn’t think orange went with purple until I saw the sunset you made on Tuesday; that was cool.”

The simple questions are not difficult to ask, the honesty is not held back, and the administration and worship pours from genuine hearts. Can this be said of adults?

Jesus was very busy while he was here on Earth. Between teaching in the Temple and on a hillside, between the private time he had with the disciples, explaining to them what was going to happen and his public ministry to the masses, he completely understood what it meant to work more than forty hours per week. Besides his general schedule, one should not overlook the healings of the demon-possessed, the lame, the leper and the paralytic; his amazing display of power over the unquenchable powers of nature; his claim over the people of the world as his lost children; his strenuous traveling schedule (from town to town on foot); his intellectual and spiritual battles with the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees; and his condemnation of the moral decline of first-century Palestine. From the extremes of feeding five thousand hungry which by the way happened because of the generosity of a child, to giving living water to a neglected woman, we see that no opportunity was too big or too small for the careful attention of Jesus. Such conviction and persistence caused his friends to worry about him. His slowing pace, his heavy eyes accented by their overbearing bags, and his blistered feet urged his disciples to prioritize his time and let only the important people approach. We can almost hear them agree as the children were carried to him for blessings. “The last thing Jesus needs is to be bothered by children.” Anyone could understand that. It is how we feel after a difficult day, let alone a difficult week or year. However, Jesus indignant words of rebuke rang in the ears of the well-meaning disciples as he commanded them to bring the children forward.

Don’t let the familiarity of this story take away from its amazing implications. Jesus wanted to be near the children. He loved them! Always! They were people

Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) drilled a well in January 1999 beside Angolo Primary School in northern Uganda with funds raised by Ryan and others.

In the six years since Ryan began raising funds for drill the well, he has become well known through television interviews and magazine and newspaper articles. Even after raising the money for the well, Ryan continued to work to raise money and awareness about water issues. He and his classmates at Holy Cross School in Kemptville, Ont. raised another \$6,000 in May 2000 in a Hike-a-thon. The money was used to ship “Free the Children” school kits to students in northern Uganda.

In the summer of 2000, Ryan went to Africa, where 5,000 people lined the road changing “Rayan” as he and his parents made their way to the well. Beside it, a plaque read

### Ryan’s Well

Funded by Ryan H.

For the Community of Angolo Primary School

“People ask me if I’m sad because my friends in Uganda are poor,” says Ryan. “They might be poor because they do not have much money but in other ways they are not poor at all. My friends aren’t really sad so I’m not sad either.”<sup>2</sup>

These are only a couple of stories of how children and youth have been able to make a difference in our world.

Here at Camrose United, our children through our church school and mid-week programs are always learning about children who are not as fortunate as they might be and are doing their part to make a difference.

They are continuing what children in our biblical story began, children like Miriam who helped her mother make a strong water tight basket in which to hide her baby brother Moses. Miriam grew into a young woman who loved to dance and sing.

Samuel served the priest Eli in the tabernacle. He trimmed the lamps. A lamp is often seen as a symbol of God’s light in the world. When Samuel heard God’s voice and acted on it, he helped keep the “lamp” of God alive in the land.

David showed courage when he had to protect the sheep against the lions, bears and other wild animals. To do this he had to develop skills with a sling shot, skills that involved great concentration. He was also able to soothe King Saul when he became upset by playing the harp for him.

Jesus showed remarkable wisdom at the age of twelve when he taught his elders, even though he was probably speaking out of turn, never mind the fact that he did not tell his parents where he was.

And then there was the boy who shared his lunch – the focus of the rotation we are finishing up today. Through this story the children are learning the concept of sharing with our community and the world. They are making soup today and invite all of us to share in that soup and to make a good will offering. They will use half of the offering to continue their Sunday School and half will go to the Mission and Service Fund.

In a couple of weeks our children and all of us will have an opportunity to share through White Gift Sunday by bringing a gift for Silent Santa or the Food Bank.

As well as being Children’s Sabbath, today we also celebrate the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this beautiful church. We often hear it said that children are the future of the church. Yes, they are. But more importantly they are the present. We have been the church for

---

<sup>2</sup> Copyright © The United Church of Canada