

Weekly Gospel Readings
The 2nd Sunday of Epep

Childlike Hearts
The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heavens

“Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”

On this blessed 2nd Sunday of Epep, the Church presents us with the Gospel from [Matthew 18:1-9](#). In this passage, Jesus responds to a question posed by His disciples: “Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ([Matthew 18:1](#) ESV). Jesus responds that entrance into the kingdom depends on having the humility of a child: “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” ([Matt 18:3](#) NKJV).

This is not just about being innocent, it’s about being humble and dependent on God the Father, like a child dependent on his parents. St. John Chrysostom reflects on the nature of a child saying: “Since both from envy the little child is pure, and from vainglory, and from longing for the first place; and he is possessed of the greatest of virtues, simplicity” (Homily 58 on Matthew).

Additionally, Jesus gives a warning about being a stumbling block to others, but also protecting the vulnerable: ‘Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea’ ([Matt 18:6](#) NKJV). So, by reminding us to be like little Children, Jesus reminds us also to be humble and to not be envious just like a child.

St. Jerome sheds light on this passage, in his Commentary on Matthew, by connecting it back to the apostles’ original question: “Although this could be a general judgment against all who scandalize anyone, yet in the context it can likewise be understood to be directed to the apostles. For... when they asked about who was the greatest... they seemed to be competing for honor”. In other words, their pride itself could become a stumbling block, not only for themselves but for others who looked to them for spiritual leadership.

The Gospel reading for today then serves as a good reminder of how we are to become like children trusting, humble, and free from competition, and to guard both ourselves and others from pride and scandal.

May we all strive to be as pure and humble as little children so the desire for praise does not affect the effectiveness of our services, whether a deacon, a teacher, a servant, or a parent. Let us then, serve not for recognition, but for love.

Resources

- ESV Bible
- NKJV Bible

- Catena Bible
- [CHURCH FATHERS: Homily 58 on Matthew \(Chrysostom\) \(newadvent.org\)](http://newadvent.org)
- [Commentary on Matthew - Jerome, St. .pdf \(isidore.co\)](http://isidore.co)