I was telling a few of you at “Priest on the Lawn” this week that, “I am a bible nerd.” I love spending time in scripture, it’s where I see God. I’m the first to acknowledge that the divine presents to people in a variety of ways. Many, perhaps most people I know will tell you they meet the divine in nature, they see God in the glory of a summer sunrise. I get it, I really do, now close the blinds and leave me to my book!

I think the reason I am a bible nerd who glimpses new aspects of God in the written word is because I am all about stories. I think in story. I frame my life in stories. I often feel a day late and a dollar short for my own life I but once I can set it as metaphor it all makes sense. The good news for me is that I love researching, writing and sharing sermons. Even as I sit at my keyboard I am aware that this is no chore, this isn’t work; it comes easy to me and I love it.

So naturally I get to tell myself that I am special, I am heavenly minded, I am wise. Aren’t I the fortunate son? Just give me a bible and gather round my feet while I discern the ways of God. And Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”

Cue the sound of screeching brakes here.

Well I don’t think I like this sentence and I’m not sure you should either. Come on now, we’re all Christians here. We know our bible stories. We know our commandments. We know the creed. You’re with me here, right? We’re wise. We’re intelligent. This sentence seems to suggest that these things don’t matter. But this is my super power! I must go away and sulk now because Jesus has offended me and I say “good night” to him every evening for heaven’s sake!

OK, enough of that. In fact Jesus does not say nor even imply that wisdom or intelligence are of lesser value. Evidence suggests that he himself was both wise and intelligent. Jesus knew his scriptures and quoted them often. If Jesus was playing Jeopardy with me tonight and a bible category came up he would nail it.

What Jesus said is that something was hidden from the wise and intelligent. Something of core importance, a central truth and it was revealed to infants. This means that there is no reduction in the value of an intellectual understanding of the nature of God or our faith as we have inherited it. Truth is it is a blessing that I have a nature that loves all this bible stuff and that it comes easily to me because it means I have an area where I can help others. This I suppose is of comparable value to the mechanic that loves cars and solving their problems. The educator that can take curriculum off the page and make it come alive in order to teach children. They both have an aptitude and skill set that allow them to help people too.

No, Jesus was not minimizing earthly wisdom and intellect; gifts are gifts and we should use them, but he was saying that the ways of God, the stuff of life are not arrived at cerebrally. Jesus was a Jew and he lived at a time when his faith leaders had intellectualized the faith. The rabbi’s, the Pharisees and the scribes were deeply learned men, they had honed their intellects and had made the understanding of their faith the highest goal. They had taken God and the ways of God and raised them into the intellectual ether, a place so rarified that they alone occupied the truly Holy space.

Those of us that are long time Christians can so easily put ourselves into that same space can’t we? We have applied reason to faith and we know our bible and our religion. In a world that thinks Matthew, Mark, Luke and John might have been the original beetles, we know. Bring on the written exam we are ready.

As I said, Jesus is not belittling those of us that have been blessed to learn about matters religious and spiritual. In fact, as Anglicans, we rest all matters of religious authority on scripture, reason and tradition. Reason matters, intellect is good and frankly if you’ve got it, use it to God’s glory. Its just that what matters most is not arrived at on the road of reason no matter how far along it we travel. What matters most Jesus says has been revealed to infants.

Babies are great aren’t they? Being a baby is an excellent way to begin life and we all get to. Many of us seek out things that all humans have in common, well, here’s one. We all start life as infants, fresh from the hand of God. Jesus says today that we all start life aware of what really and actually matters. The stuff of life, what it means to be fully human, fully a child of God, the eternal truths were standard issue to each of us from the time our little lungs drew breath.

So let’s consider what small children know that we, as adults cannot attain to by merit of intellectual pursuit. At this vital point in the sermon I am at a significant loss. You see, while life has afforded me four university degrees and easy understanding of scriptures I never had children. I never lived with a brand new human and witnessed its growth and maturation. So as I venture some observations I wholly and honestly invite your feedback, because I know that when it comes to children, these most blessed of God, you are the authorities.

It seems to me, and the new Netflix docu-series on Babies supports this, that babies come into this word innately aware of all that matters in life. When that new miracle is placed into the warmth of its mother’s embrace it settles in. No one teaches the miracle that its mother has the warmth and love and food and safety that it requires to thrive it knows.

All humans are vulnerable. All humans need to look beyond themselves for the completion that we call love. All humans exist in a state of need; need for warmth and love and sustenance. Little children know this to be true. This is the wisdom, I believe Jesus is pointing to today. “Look to the children”, I hear him saying, they know that the richness of life is found beyond ourselves.” As we “mature” in life, as we “grow up” we convince ourselves that we can, even must, rely on ourselves to provide for our needs and wants… how foolish are we? We don’t grow up at all we “grow in”. In on our sorry selfish selves in a futile quest to find that which can only be found in our “Heavenly Parent.”

If you heard Paul’s words today you heard him really flesh out what we talked about last week. I mentioned that Martin Luther famously concluded; “We are free to do what we want but we are bound to do what we want.” As we celebrate ourselves, our perceived autonomy we come to believe that the height of freedom is to stand, unrestricted and alone. Children have no such delusion. Little ones know that life is a beautiful adventure and that they live it in need of others.

The wisdom of children which seems to stay hidden from those of us that are intellectual and learned fools is that children know they need a hug. Last week I concluded that the long journey of life is to arrive at a place where we allow ourselves to be like goslings being gathered under their mother’s wing. I think today’s lesson is really quite similar. I hear Jesus saying, “For heaven’s sake, take your books and your learning, your reason and your intellect and set them down for just a moment, look to your loving creator, stand tall on your tippy-toes, and reach up for a hug. Amen