

A PERSON'S A PERSON NO MATTER HOW SMALL

Luke 4:14-21

I Corinthians 12:12-31a

Sunrise Presbyterian Church

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Wednesday afternoons at God's Kids are special times for Sunrise. One reason for this are the marvelous story books Jackie Thompson introduces to our children. Jackie pairs children's story books with the lectionary scriptures for the week. The children hear the story and discuss it. They make crafts which help interpret it. This month they heard a marvelous story about a teacher in Honduras who helped a village learn to compost and terrace their soil so that they could grow vegetables. Our kids then planted tomato seeds so that they could experience growing vegetables. (The book is in Addie's Corner. You can check it out!)

The kids and I - and many of us - are happy for Jackie that she is moving - but we are also very sad because her teaching and nurturing have been incredibly important for our children. I've been thinking about the many books Jackie has introduced to me and others - but my favorite, and I think a favorite of the children is a Dr. Seuss classic, *Horton Hears a Who!*

Perhaps most of us have read the story about Horton the elephant who hears a small noise while he drinks at his pool. But in case, we can't quite recall the story - in the middle of his drinking and splashing in the pool at Nool - Horton hears a small noise - just a faint yelp - perhaps a cry for help. And Horton stops his splashing to listen and talk.

It is a small speck - a bit of dust - too small for his elephant eyes to see - but he hears the cry, and he stops to care - because the speck is "some poor person who'd shaking with fear that he'll blow in the pool

- with no way to steer." So Horton says, "I'll just have to save him. Because, after all, a person's a person, no matter how small."

Horton cares for the speck and discovers that it is not just one person in the drop of water - instead, it is an entire town - with buildings and people - churches and schools. The people of Whoville depend on Horton for life, and Horton wants to save them.

But the monkeys, the kangaroos, and the black-bottomed eagle think Horton is daft - they think Horton is loony - an absolute loser because they say he is talking to "*Whos* who are *not!*" They laugh at him - poke fun at him - call him names - and the black-bottomed eagle makes off with the *Whos* to boil them all in a "hot steaming kettle of Beezle-Nut oil!"

Horton searches high and low for his friends - because he repeats - "A person's a person no matter how small." The *Whos* try to shout so that the kangaroos can hear them - to stop the plot to boil them in oil -- but no matter how loud they cry - it's just Horton who hears. And yet it is the smallest *who* of all - just a small boy who's off in his room paying no attention to the imminent doom - it's his voice that is needed to make the cry heard - not just by Horton but by the whole herd - and that cry proves that the *Whos* are people no matter how small.

Small people - non-important people - losers - poor people - oppressed people play a large part in many stories in the Bible. Paul talks about them in the letter he writes to the church at Corinth. He says that the church is like a body - with eyes and ears - hands and feet. The members of the church have different gifts which God gives us - not for ourselves - but for the good of the whole body. The eyes are important - but so are every other part of the body - even the parts of our bodies we think are not important - Paul reminds us - are critically necessary. Try breaking a little toe - and soon we'll discover how important toes are! God gives us all gifts to use for the common good - because "a person's a person no matter how small." And a person has gifts no matter how small.

Jesus, likewise, speaks in our morning reading about people we might think are not important. In the reading, Jesus returns home to Nazareth where he grew up - goes to the synagogue, unrolls the scroll and announces by using the words of Isaiah that he has come to "bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." Jesus has heard the cries of the *Whos in Whoville* - he's heard the worries of his own people in Nazareth - he hears their struggle against occupation and Roman imperialism - and he announces his mission to the prisoners, the oppressed, the blind - because "a person's a person no matter how small." And not unlike Horton - his neighbors and friends - his relatives and others call him names - poke fun and chase him from town.

And yet, Jesus calls us to listen with him - for the sound of those who struggle - to the pleas of the prisoners - to the cries of those who need food and housing - clean water and jobs. Jesus calls us to listen with him - just as Horton listens to the *Whos*. But Jesus also calls us to realize the gifts we have been given for the good of others.

All too often - we fail to act because we imagine our words will have little impact. All too often - we don't volunteer to teach - because we think no one would listen and we would not know what to do. All too often - we may not lift our voices in song - because we might be off key. All too often - we sit back and wait on others - whom we think are more gifted - more talented than we are. All too often - we fail to use our gifts.

Today as we celebrate our *God's Kids* program - and the many gifts of adults and children which make that program great - Horton is a good reminder to us - to listen - no matter how small a voice - no matter how minor - because after all - "a person's a person, no matter how small." Alleluia! Amen.