

WELCOME LITTLE CHILDREN

At the Hilbre Road House Group we have been working our way through the Gospel according to St Mark. One verse in particular struck me last week, and I thought I would share my thoughts on it with you.



“He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them ‘Whoever welcomes on of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me’ ”. Mark 9 36-7.

On first reading the verse, the reaction is to try to think what it is about children that leads Jesus to say this. Is it their simplicity, their uncomplicated acceptance? Or is “child” not meant literally, but perhaps it means a new believer, a “child in faith”, who must be welcomed into the circle so that faith can grow?

But what struck me was the context of the verses. At the beginning of the section, Jesus and the disciples had been travelling the road to Capernaum. And as the disciples walked along they argued amongst themselves as to which of them was the greatest.

Now in arguing this one might claim to be wiser than the rest, another might claim to be braver than the rest. yet another stronger than the rest, and so on. Arguing that one is the greatest means finding aspects in which one is superior to the others, and then, of course, arguing that that attribute is more important than other attributes.

But if we turn to a child, such arguments do not make sense. A child may *become* wise, brave or strong, but all that lies in the future. A child cannot be argued to be superior in these respects. But children should be accepted, and not because of the qualities they bring with them, but because they are loved by the Father, this love being clearly shown in the love of Jesus.

So it is not for our worth that we should be accepted, nor for their worth that we should accept others, but because we are loved as children of God, not for what we are, but for who we are.