

Good morning everyone, my name is Mark and I'm one of the pastors on staff here at North Shore Alliance. Over the past three weeks, we've been running with a Summer Sermon Series entitled *My Story/God's Story*.

In our day and time, the words "me, myself, and I" figure prominently. *This is my life; this is what I need; I will make that decision for myself.* The question is, how do we think Christianly about our own lives?

We are actresses and actors in our own story but the story being written is not entirely of our own making. Our story cannot be separated from God's story, in fact, God is the principal Author. Our Summer Series, *My Story/God's Story*, intends to make the connection between the life we are living and the story God is writing in our lives.

Each week we have been interviewing people from our congregation and this morning I have the privilege of interviewing our Children's Pastor, Megan Yusep; let's welcome Megan as she joins me on stage.

Before we get into the heart of the interview, I'm going to ask Megan a few rapid fire questions:

What's your favourite colour?

Favourite dessert?

How tall are you? Would you rather be 1 foot taller than you are, or, 1 foot shorter than you are? Why?

What's your favourite movie?

Do you have a celebrity crush?

Let's dive a little more deeply into your story...*where were you born and raised? What do you love about Lloydminster? Tell us a little about the family you grew up in.*

I've heard you talk about how you came to Christ, and I'd love you to share a part of that story with us. You had a number of friends and leaders who had a big influence on your faith journey.

- *What impact did these friendship have on your journey to faith?*
- *What did you see in them?*
- *What would you say to children about their influence on people who don't yet know Jesus?*

You've been at our church for the last 4.5 months, working with children, and I'd like to ask, *why Children's Ministry?*

- *What do you enjoy about working with children?*
- *Why is working in Children's Ministry so important?*
- *What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering with children at NSA?*

Megan, maybe talk for a few minutes about your desire for children to flourish spiritually. *What do you pray they will experience?*

How can we be praying for you?

Pray for Megan

If you were to read through the Gospels, paying attention to Jesus' favourite subject, there is really no contest. Everywhere Jesus went He spoke about the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is like the tiniest of seeds—a mustard seed—that grows into a large tree. The kingdom of God is like a farmer scattering seed. *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*¹

The main point of this last saying is that salvation—which is the short form for a life with God both now and forever—is beyond compare. Even if you had to sell everything you had, it wouldn't come close to the value of what God offers. Whatever we must give up, in the pursuit of Jesus, pales in comparison to what we receive. We are never impoverished by surrendering to God, we are always enlarged, always blessed.

This word, *“kingdom,”* assumes three interconnected realities: a ruler, a people, and a realm. God is the ruler, and His kingdom exists wherever people gather in His name, and align with His priorities.

Clearly, we do not live in a world where God's kingship is universally recognized. God *is* ruling, but His leadership—His way of life—has yet to be fully embraced. But where God's kingdom is embraced, we see evidence of justice, love, healing, wholeness, reconciliation, and peace begin to grow.

¹ Matthew 13:44.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He not only preached about the kingdom, He demonstrated the kingdom through His healing ministry, through His acts of compassion and justice. His intent was that people would turn to Him and embrace the way of God.

As Jesus healed people, news of His miracles spread—more and more people wanted to see what He was doing and hear what He was saying. And at times, with the crowds swelling around them, the disciples took it upon themselves to act as Jesus' body guards, brushing aside those they perceived to be less worthy of Jesus' attention. Luke 18:15-17, tells of one such time.

We read, *“People were...bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’”*

This is a remarkable statement! The kingdom of God belongs to children—or to those who are like children. One cannot enter into God's kingdom, unless they receive it like a child.

I've chosen this text for today because for the past week, at our SummerJam children's camp, we've had over 160 children running, singing, playing, learning, and laughing in our building. *“Let the children come to me,”* Jesus said, for the kingdom belongs to them. In fact, unless you receive the kingdom of God, like a little child, you will never enter in.

If I were to highlight one word from Jesus' teaching, as being the key that unlocks the meaning, it would be the word “**receive**”.

Children enter into this world, utterly and completely dependant on their caregivers. They can't feed, clean, clothe, or even speak for themselves. **Everything they need must be received.** And unless they are given good reason to fear, they simply trust that everything they need will be provided. Again, unless they are raised in the absence of loving care, children don't live from a place of merit. The concept that they must earn their own way, that they must perform to secure love, respect, or opportunities...this is something they learn much later, through broken experiences of relationship.

If we want to get in on what God is doing, we can learn a lot from little children. Children don't say one thing but mean another, they don't pretend like they have it all together. When a child throws a temper tantrum in public, they could care less what anyone else thinks about them. It's the parents who are embarrassed.

When children need something they turn to the one they trust: *I'm hungry; I'm thirsty; I'm tired; I'm scared.* They live by faith, based on past experiences, that their needs will be provided for.

Jesus once said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”² The Greek word that is translated here as “poor,” refers to someone who is destitute and forced to beg. The one who is poor in spirit recognizes that they need God—utterly and completely. All of us stand before God in moral and spiritual bankruptcy; we are unable to save ourselves.

Blessed are you, Jesus says, when you recognize your need. Blessed are you when you recognize that you are empty handed, *and*, loved beyond measure. Blessed are you when you come humbly, asking for, and expecting to receive, God's mercy. Blessed are you when you delight to surrender and submit to Jesus, for then and only then, can you enter the kingdom.

This past week at SummerJam, our children explored the following themes: When life is unfair, God is good. When life is scary, God is good. When life changes, God is good. When life is sad, God is good. Nahum 1:7 says, “*The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him*”.

Can I ask you to do something today? If you are experiencing an injustice of some kind, if you are experiencing fear, or change, or sadness, by faith, like a little child, turn to your Father in Heaven, and ask for what you need. He is good; He is faithful; we can trust Him.

Pray

Worship

Benediction

² Matthew 5:3.