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## Anjou UNITED CHURCH

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**“Take a Higher View”**

**Read Sherman**

**Trinity-Anjou Pastoral Charge**

**Feb. 26, 2017**

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**Scriptures: Matthew 17:1-9**

**Let us pray: May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be a witness, O God, to your Way of love, justice and faithful walking with us. Amen.**

Our theme this morning has already taught me a lot about our kids and what they go through, eh? This morning, and last night at Messy Church, they have proven to be so articulate about their experience in their schools. Sometimes they get picked on. Sometimes they get bullied. Sometimes they get intimidated. Sometimes, they can begin to feel bad about themselves because of what other kids around them do or say. And I know some of you are thinking "that's part of growing up, you've got to learn to toughen up" but it's still terrible and a shame anyone has to go through it.

We used to think "sticks and stones" were needed to hurt us, that words could never wound us in our core. Now, I think we know better. Words, like actions, can hurt, especially if we allow what others say to us or about us to enter that core place within us that no one has a right to diminish. That's that core place, we call it our hearts, where God has put the divine image. That's the place where our perfect creation resides, a gift of God that no human can change or erase. But sadly, we're not taught about that perfect place within us. Made in God's image, we nevertheless forget what being a child of God means - that we are "wonderfully and fearfully made" as Ps. 139 puts it - and that at our core is a beauty and preciousness that God cherishes, no matter how far off course our lives may have taken us away from it.

Thank God that here at Trinity, and within the Christian faith, we can teach our children about that core of love within them, a core that can help them stand firm when others attempt to belittle or hurt them. They can stand strong in the unconditional love of God revealed by Jesus as available to all. They can count on his presence and friendship when it seems maybe everyone else has deserted them. But even so, how can we make it our business to be present as well, to stand by our children, to allow them to lean on us when life will inevitably get tough?

I want to share a short video to illustrate what this could look like. In it, we'll meet a special needs 5th grade student named James Wilmer who'd experienced being ostracized and bullied at his school for being "different."

But this year, things are way different for him. Let's find out what has changed! (Show video (USA TODAY Inspiration) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdeuivQYnas&t=5s&spfreload=10>)

Wow - what do you think? What got into this group of boys to take James under their wing, rather than join the crowd who were getting kicks out of bullying someone more vulnerable than they were? The video doesn't actually tell us that story of transformation, only the results, and is it ever beautiful to behold. Maybe almost as beautiful as the mountaintop transfiguration of Jesus, when the disciples who were there saw Jesus in a new light. They want to stay there in that moment, almost like I pray this tight group of 5th grade friends can always surround their friend James with the laughter and love of belonging to each other.

In the end, of course, we know we all do have to keep growing up in life. We grow and change, we leave school, leave home, change sets of friends, and yes, maybe develop the tough skins we need to deal with the slings and arrows that life throws our way. Peter, James and John realize they will have to leave the mountain and continue on the road with Jesus. But maybe here at Trinity we can pledge to support the children and families we encounter here to the best of our ability for as long as they continue to walk with us in community and faith. We can be like that posse of five friends who show up for the kids, know them by name, celebrate their successes and help guard their core hearts when the tough times come.

What a joy it is for us to watch as our kids grow up and begin to thrive. Lets pledge to do what we can to help them, even beginning with remembering as adults to treat each other with the love and respect that Jesus showed to everyone he encountered. Let Christ be our guide, even as he leads us to take a higher view of who we can be for others, especially our kids. Amen.