



Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 1

The Powerful Compliment

Title: The Powerful Compliment
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Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 3: 13-17
Theme: God's compliment after Jesus came out of the waters of his baptism

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children and ask them about special compliments that they may have received and given, and what it feels like to receive and give compliments. Explain that today's story is there to help us understand what it was like for Jesus to get a special compliment from God when he was baptized. Show them Matthew 3, where that event is recorded, and alert them to listen for it when the Gospel is read in the service. Invite everyone to become quiet and comfortable, to remember that God is near, and that this children's time is an important part of worshipping God. God loves it when we listen and respond to God's words and actions with our whole hearts

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Story:

(This is a true story, but the names have been changed.)

Matthew was about to start grade two in a new school. His mother phoned the teacher to warn her about her terrible son. She told her that Matthew got into fights every day and would swear at the teachers because of his bad temper. The teacher listened and thanked the mother for the warning and said good-bye.

This teacher believed that there was good in every person and wondered what Matthew would be good at. On the first day of school, she noticed Matthew was getting annoyed because the boy next to him was tapping his pencil. Matthew's face was getting red and his body was tensing up, but he was controlling his temper for the moment. So, the teacher decided to take action to avoid the fight she saw coming and called for the whole class's attention. She explained to them that, if things made them angry, they could control their temper by counting to 10 or by thinking of nice ways to ask the person who was bothering them to stop. Then she complimented Matthew for showing good self-control when someone was annoying him. She ended by saying, if they could all control their tempers like Matthew had shown her he was doing that morning, grade two would be a much more pleasant experience for everyone. When the children went out for recess, she told Matthew that if there ever was a time that things got too hard for him to handle, he could come tell her. She would be glad to help him sort it out. He did not have to solve all of his problems on his own.

Two months later, the teacher got a phone call from Matthew's mother. Matthew's mother wanted to know what the teacher had said or

done to produce such a change in her son. He was becoming pleasant, cheerful and helpful, even around his brother and sister. She was used to him crying and pretending to be sick every day so he could miss school. Now, when he was sick and she tried to keep him home, he cried that he wanted to go to school.

Matthew turned out to be one of the teacher's best behaved students. One honest compliment and the support of his teacher had given him the encouragement and power to improve his behaviour. Our Scripture reading today includes the compliment God gave Jesus after he was baptized. The heavens opened up and the Spirit of God descended as a dove and a voice from heaven said, "This is my son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Pleasing God was a great compliment for Jesus.

Prayer:

Thank you God, for the blessing and strength we get from real compliments. Thank you for making us and saying that we are very good, and for supporting us with your blessings. Help us to share that blessing with others who need encouragement and strength. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder if Jesus remembered these words when he faced hard times.
- I wonder how Jesus shared the blessing of that compliment with others.
- I wonder what pleases God about each of us.
- I wonder how we can share the blessing of God's pleasure with us.