



An rfour.org Children's Time

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Based on scripture from Lectionary Year C

Written for January 20, 2013

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10

Good morning! I have a question for you:

Can you tell me what a "compliment" is?

That's right! When you tell someone something nice about themselves.

Why do you usually give a compliment?

Yes! Because you like the person and you want them to know what you like about them.

Have you ever given a compliment to someone and they didn't hear you?

No? If this had happened to you, it was probably because that other person wasn't completely paying attention to you.

Maybe they were doing something else at the same time they were listening to you.

We're going to do a little demonstration now of what such lack of focus could look like. I need a volunteer who is willing to give me a compliment. Don't worry, I'll tell you what to say. I want you to tell me that I have the coolest..., uh... let's see....the coolest elbows you've ever seen. You can tell me you like how *sharp* they are. But, while you are trying to tell me that, I'll be busy doing other things. Everybody else, after we're done, you can tell me how well I heard and understood the compliment.

[Note: You're going to want to pick a loud, always-wants-to-answer-the-question type of kid for this role. I also recommend talking to him/her before worship and ask for their help at that point. Then, explain to them what's going to happen, how you're going to act and what you'll want them to do, so they know what to expect]

Ready? Set... GO!

[At this point pull out your cell phone and turn your back on the compliment-giver. Start talking loudly into the phone. Say something for about 10 to 15 seconds that gets you to this line, "...haha that is SOOO funny. I'm gonna put that on twitter right now" then flip your phone open and start texting and telling the other kids around you how funny this other person is and how you like to post their funny comments so that other people think you're funny. All the while the compliment-giving child will be trying to get your attention. From time to time, turn to him/her and say, "Just a moment. I'll be with you in a moment." Then be quiet for a moment while you're "texting" and let the child say his/her line without interruption. Then feign interest, nod your head, say "hmm...very interesting." Then look up and say, "Wait. What did you just say about Tim Tebow, the football player?" Wait for the compliment, then say, still somewhat confused, "You like Tim Tebow's elbows...? You know now that you mention it, they ARE kind of sharp, aren't they?" Then break from character and tell the compliment-giving child, "You did very well, ___[use name]___. Thank you for being so patient with me."]

So, everyone, what do you think? How well did I hear and understand the compliment?

You're right. I didn't hear it very well at all.

Why didn't I understand very well?

Yep. I was paying attention to all sorts of other things.

I bring this up, because in today's scripture, there's lots of compliments going on. In the Isaiah reading, the writer is telling us how much God likes us. The writer tells us that we are like a crown of beauty to God and that God delights in us, and rejoices in us. Those are really nice things to say about us, don't you think? God must really like us.

But what if we're too busy doing something else all the time or too busy talking to and listening to other people and can't hear such compliments from God? Then we wouldn't realize and understand how much God likes, loves and cares for us, would we?

So one way we can help ourselves pay attention to God is by choosing to give God our own compliments. Because while we do that, then we'll be more focused on God and less distracted, right? And in fact, we see the writer in the other scripture reading doing that very exact thing. The writer is giving God all these compliments about being faithful and righteous and loving. Another word we can think of that is similar and goes along with "compliment," here, is "praise." And this is the Good News for today: As we praise and compliment God, then we are more able to hear, know and understand how God loves, cares and delights in us.

Let's pray

This is a repeat-after-me prayer:

Dear God

Dear God

Thank you for loving us...

Thank you for loving us

...and caring for us...

And caring for us

...and delighting in us.

And delighting in us

And thank you for telling us...

And thank you for telling us

...even when we're not listening.

Even when we're not listening

Help us to listen better...

Help us to listen better

...so that we can better receive...

So that we can better receive

...and then better share...

And then better share

...your love, care and delight.

Your love, care and delight.

Amen

Amen