

## Thought for the Day 27th August - Helen Cox

Many will remember the great fire which swept through Notre Dame Cathedral in 2019, destroying hundreds of years of history, sacred objects and art. Miraculously the three famous Rose stained glass windows survived. More recently another cathedral was pictured on our television screens with its rose stained glass window destroyed. Using coloured glass in churches to depict scripture was for many centuries a feature around the world and can be seen to this day here in Wollongong.

I have a story to share about one window which depicted a much loved story about Jesus.

For many years I was involved with children with disabilities, in particular autism spectrum disorder. One of my grandchildren was psychologically untestable and the prognosis was very negative. She had no speech and challenging behaviours but with a lot of intervention there was a glimpse of response to music. She began to sing words before she spoke words! Patient repetition with songs, dancing was bringing results, so as well as being helped in the Sunday School at St John's I found a church in the city which had a lot of music on Sunday evenings, and would drive her in and on the way talk to her about how Jesus loved the little children.

One evening as I was chatting away when she would have been 8 or 9 years old and beginning to say chunks of language, a little voice beside me said "Jesus loves the lambs". Let me say I would call this one of those 'eureka moments' which anyone with a disabled child would understand, but where had that come from? Then I remembered the memorial stained glass windows in the church and the depiction of Jesus carrying the lost sheep in His arms, a familiar picture illustrating the parable. She was a visual learner and the picture in the window had helped her understand how Jesus is the Good Shepherd and cares for the lambs. I was also reminded that for her one picture was worth a thousand words!

The parable is in three gospels, Matthew 18: 10-14, Mark 10: 13-16, and Luke 18: 15-17.

Mark records how Jesus rebuked the disciples for turning the children away and how He took them in his arms and blessed them, Luke adds that Jesus is teaching that unless we receive the kingdom like a child we shall not enter it, and Matthew teaches that the Good Shepherd seeks and finds even the lamb which is lost and rejoices over it more than the ninety-nine that never went astray and v 14 points out "so it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that these little ones should perish". Matthew when rebuking the disciples, also teaches in chapter 18: 3 "except you turn and become as little children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven".

In the disability community there is often discrimination and exclusion, ie. what the disciples did, but God uses many ways to seek out his children and rejoices over one.

We learn through His Word, through the wonder of Creation, through Art and Music and Cathedrals, but not all of us have personal obstacles which may make it difficult to learn about God's love. We also learn that no-one was denied Jesus' love during His ministry.

*(continued)*

This child with a disability was included in the flock through an unexpected source.

The light of understanding shone through and Jesus rejoiced.

There is a lovely old children's hymn, with a chorus which goes like this:

"If I come to Jesus,  
Happy shall I be,  
He is gently calling little ones like me".  
(FJ van Alstyne 1820-1915)

God's love seeks and saves!