SCRIPTURE: MARK 9:30-37

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

REFLECTION

Jesus lived when the Roman Empire dominated Israel. The Roman Empire treasured obedience and worship of the emperor. The Roman Empire was not pleased with Jesus because he taught a different way of life and people were attracted to his message. He was disruptive because he treasured people–even those the Roman Empire hated. Roman authorities became more and more frustrated with Jesus, but he did not back down. This is what Jesus was speaking about when he said the Son of Man would be betrayed and killed.

The Roman Empire also did not always treat children very well. According to historians, Romans did not believe children had human rights. And girls were treated unfairly. They were not allowed to go to school, and were made to marry very young. Little girls were not treasured.

As Jesus often did, he rejected this idea and showed us another way.

Jesus believed and taught children were important. So when the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest, Jesus took a child in his arms. He told them if they welcomed a child, they would be welcoming Jesus himself. Jesus could have said to the bickering disciples, "You're all wrong. I am the greatest." Instead, Jesus raised up a child, showing them and us the greatness in children.

Jesus loved to empower people who were not appreciated. Imagine this child was a little girl. She was not allowed to go to school, she did not get to inherit her family's land or business. She did not have many choices at all. Then Jesus comes along and tells everyone she represents the Son of God! I wonder if she felt treasured that day.

All children should feel treasured by their families and communities. When we are tempted to argue with each other about who is the best and greatest, who should be in control or make decisions, Jesus shows us people are a true treasure, not being in the number one spot. On days you do not feel like a treasure, share that feeling with a trusted family member or friend so they can remind you how precious you are, just like Jesus did.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What makes you feel most treasured?
- How do you know you are treasured in your family?
- What do you do when you don't feel very loved?

ACTIVITY

Sometimes grown-ups forget to give children choices or decision-making opportunities. And when a child doesn't get to make any choices, they feel powerless. What does your family do to show children's voices are important?

Choose one of the following adventures to give the children in your family some decision-making power. What happens when the people last in line get to be first to make a choice?

- Children Choose and Make Dinner (with help!)
- Children Choose an Outdoor Family Activity
- Children Choose an Indoor Family Activity
- Children Choose a Furniture Arrangement
- Children Choose…(add your own)

PRAYER

Father, Mother, Parent of us all,

We are all your precious children –

some old, some young.

You treasure us in your heart and nothing can change your love for us.

Help us welcome and cherish the children in our lives.

Amen.

This page intentionally left blank.

WHOEVER [WANTS TO BE] FIRST MUST BE LAST