

*Innocence*  
By Rev. Erik Buss  
July 28, 2019

The Lord tells us that we need to be like a little child to enter the kingdom heaven. We would not want to be a child again. Rather we'd like an awareness of our need for our Heavenly Father that children have for their natural parents, the humility of spirit that makes us teachable, the trust in His guidance that seems to come naturally to children: the willingness of a child with the wisdom of experience. We adults can pretend that we can make it on our own without the Lord. A child cannot buy into this lie. A child knows he or she cannot survive without grownups.

The disciples wanted to send children away, presumably because they were bothering the adults who were doing "important" things. Like children, innocence can also seem unimportant. It is a quiet emotion, one that seems naive and even silly when we are busy. We are told that the angels of the highest heaven, the most innocent, appear simple and less wise than the angels of the lower heavens, even though they are the wisest by far (*Heaven & Hell* 280). Innocence is the great leveler because your education, income, IQ, ambition, good looks and social skills, all become irrelevant.

In another story involving children, the context is of pride and comparing oneself to others. Who is greatest? Humility, needing the Lord, is what gets us to heaven. Innocence is not status-conscious, just as young children are not. It would never, like the disciples did, try to deny the right of John's disciples to cast out demons because they weren't in the right club.

What do you want in your mind? It can feel exhilarating to be naughty, and feels authentic and powerful to be bad at times. If it didn't we'd never do what's wrong. The Lord describes evil as a sweet drug that kills – sugar-coated poison. He asks us to be single-minded in protecting the innocence in us, just as we would prioritize protecting a helpless child in our care.

The benefit of allowing innocence into our lives is peace and safety. The greatest threat to our peace of mind is when we can't even trust ourselves to do what our better self wants to. Choosing to be the Lord's child, trusting in His will and truth, creates that safety. This is depicted in Isaiah in these words: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den."

(Isaiah 11:1-11) Imagine being able to receive that kind of peace and safety. New Church teaching says, "All in heaven are kept secure by the Lord through states of innocence." (*Arcana Coelestia* 3159:5) "Where the good of innocence is, there hell cannot enter." (*Arcana Coelestia* 10,132:8) Can we choose to take one more step toward doing the Lord's will with child-like trust that it will lead to a good end?

Lessons: Matthew 19:13-28, Mark 9:33-48, *Arcana Coelestia* 3183