



HE TOOK THE CHILDREN IN HIS ARMS

January 2016

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16

"...he took the children in his arms." Wouldn't you like to be one of those children? Haven't you ever wished for such closeness with Jesus? During times of depression I crave having a true sense of his presence. I need an assurance of his love that leaves no doubt in my mind or heart. Yes, when I'm down, I need God more than ever. And yet, it

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seems that it's then that he seems furthest away.

I remember such a time one Sunday. I had woken up feeling down. Even the journaling that often helps me recover a more positive mood did not help this day.

I needed to feel God with me; I longed to meet with him. So I decided to go to church despite my mood, realizing I wouldn't be able to be my usual friendly self. Perhaps I could find a corner in the sanctuary and hide. I did not come to meet with the people. All I wanted—all I came for—was God and the love he promises.

Although I knew what I needed, I could not at the time identify exactly what this love would look like or feel like. In the space I was in I was too far too distant from God to know him. Might a feeling of abandonment be too strong a description of what it felt like? I know at times it has almost felt like that.

During worship that morning I listened to the singing, sitting with head in hands, wrapped within myself. I couldn't sing. All I could do was to listen. But I did not find God in the worship. I did not find God during the sermon either. I did see a glimmer of his presence during the congregational prayer though the light quickly faded.

During the closing song, I sat once again with my head in my hands, hoping to feel God with me, trying to pray. And here—at the very end of the service—God did make himself known.

As the song continued, I felt a friend's hand tenderly stroke my shoulder. How wonderful that felt! In that gentle touch I knew God was with me. Such comfort! I felt cared for, loved. With that simple touch from a friend it was as though God had blessed me in the way he had blessed those little children long ago.

Thus began my road back.

Marja