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Littleness & Surrender

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Welcome, my name is Heather Khym. And today I'm going to be talking about "Littleness and Surrender." Let's begin with a prayer.

In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus we welcome you here. We welcome you into our hearts, into our homes, into our lives. We ask that you would speak your words of life and truth. Lord, that you would bring your light and shine it in the dark places in our hearts so that you can bring us into freedom and wholeness. We ask that you would help us to understand your way of littleness and surrender so that we too can surrender all to the Father. We pray this in Jesus name, amen. In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I'm excited to talk about this topic. I couldn't have said that maybe even 15 years ago, but littleness and surrender is something that God has been bringing up for me over and over and over again, and I'm going to share a bit of my story with you. And I do think that these two things are essential not just for the healing journey, but also in the entire spiritual life. Jesus showed us this and as I said in my last talk that Jesus showed us how to live and He could have come into earth, He could have come as a king, He could have come on a horse, He could have come with an army and in all of his majesty, but instead He chose to come as a little vulnerable baby. He came as a son dependent on his Father and he did this to show us that we too are supposed to be dependent on God the Father.

We see this in the Lord's prayer as He teaches us how to pray and we see it again when He's in the garden and He's saying, "**Lord, Father not my will, but Your will be done.**" And we also see it in His teachings like in the book of Matthew chapter 18, verse two to four. And he says, "He called the little child to Him and placed the child among them. And he said, **'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'**" There's something about being little as a child that God wanted us to know as one of the keys of being a follower of Jesus, but also to experiencing the fullness of life.

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I want to start by just sharing a little bit of my story with you. About 10 years ago, maybe a little bit longer than that, I started to experience a lot of physical symptoms that were really unusual for me. I was dizzy, I was very tired, I was feeling quite disoriented. A lot of days I had all kinds of physical ailments and I wasn't sleeping and my stomach was in a lot of pain, and I thought that there was something very, very serious going on for me. Something like cancer or whatever. I went through all of these tests and heart tests and all kinds of stuff like that. And what ended up coming back was nothing. There was nothing that they could find that was wrong with me. And when I met with the neurologist, I said, "Well, what do you think is going on?" And he said, "Well, I think it's stress." And I literally laughed out loud in his office and I said, "You've got to be joking." I said, "You don't understand how much I'm suffering here." And he said, "I don't think you understand the power that stress and anxiety can have in our life."

And I really was taken aback because I was like, wow, I didn't realize that I was struggling that much. And it started this process. Once I knew that I didn't have like a physical ailment that I needed to find a cure for. That my physical ailments were really stemming from something else going on in my heart, I started to dig deeper into it and it was a process of going to counseling and spiritual direction and a lot of prayer and soul-searching. And as I was praying for healing, I mean, I really was suffering physically so much that I was crying out to the Lord over and over again for Him to heal me and seemingly He wasn't intervening especially not intervening when I thought He should. This process of praying through some of these issues within my own heart led me to a deeper understanding of my own story.

When I was younger I experienced a lot of spiritual abuse from someone in my family who was very involved in the occult. And there was a lot of darkness when I was a child in our home. Just spiritual darkness. And most people weren't aware of it, but I was the youngest and I kind of saw it all happening and really caught the brunt of a lot of the anger and the darkness that was around. And in that situation I was filled with so much fear. The fear was paralyzing. I couldn't sleep at night and I really, really struggled. And couldn't tell anybody this story. It was just a big secret. And I think for many of us who've experienced various things, it may not be like my story, but there are places in our past where we've experienced difficulty and it was a secret, and we didn't know how to tell that secret to anyone.

And in my praying and asking God to help me, I didn't feel like God was coming and it didn't feel like there was any breakthrough. And so the lie that I believed at that time was that God was distant and that He didn't really care about me. And

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that I was going to have to figure it out on my own. I was going to have to be strong and I was going to have to buckle down and get through it. And that was something I didn't know at the time that that was the agreement that I was making with this lie. But what happened as I learned about my own story, and I kind of took time to spend with it, I realized, wow, this is something that I've carried through the majority of my life. That I really have acted as though God wasn't going to come through. And I was carrying the weight of taking care of myself and everybody else around me just in case God wasn't going to come through.

And really, I ended up playing kind of the role of God. I was taking the weight of the world on my shoulders, always looking around every corner for something bad to happen. And I didn't even realize that this was how I was living. I was operating almost like in practical ways as an atheist. As if God didn't exist. As if He didn't really care. I wasn't pressing into Him as a Father. I wasn't leaning on Him, depending on Him as a child would depend on a loving Father. I was just trying to carry it all. And I grew up with a lot of my friends in high school. They would look to me as being the strong one. The one that they could look to and lean on. And I didn't really feel like I had anyone to do that with. That it was just up to me.

In the process of me praying through all of that, I realized that that had taken a huge turn. That as life increased and the pressure and the responsibility increased, and I got married and I had children and I had a job and there was all of these other people under my care, that living like that it actually crushed me. And that is why I started to experience all of the anxiety and the unraveling that was going on because we are not meant to live that way.

Jesus was able to come into these parts of my story and speak life into where those wounds occurred and really changed my perspective to see that He was with me all along. That He actually was protecting me and that He was with me in the parts and the places of my heart where I thought that I was abandoned by Him. And that experience in my prayer and throughout this time is probably over the course of two to three years of struggle, I realized that God really was there. That He cared, that He wasn't distant. And it changed my perspective so dramatically that my physical ailments subsided and eventually they all went away.

And what I learned in the process of this and what I'm continuing to learn over and over again is that being little and surrendering, all the places that we are trying to be strong and cope and hold it together is the key to being free. We are not meant to live like that because we are made to be in relationship with God. And He is our savior. And I realized that we can't experience Jesus as a savior if we're not willing

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to admit that we have weakness and that we are in need of a savior. If we're taking care of it all, we don't have any need. We don't have any need for a savior. It's only in embracing our littleness and our weakness that we are able to look to God and say, "I am so weak God, please come and be strength for me. Allow me to lean into you, to your power, to your strength." And that's when things are a game changer.

Leaning into the strength and power of God, leaning into His comfort, His presence, His providence. And this goes hand in hand with trust. Trust that He is good, trust that He cares, trust that He is who He says He is. Surrender and trust are key in embracing our littleness. Jesus, he admitted when he was feeling weak in the garden. He was overcome with this pressure and he was overcome with this overwhelming pain, but he surrendered it to the Father. He kept saying, "Father, if this can be taken from me, please take it away." And it's as if he's saying through that we can take, he was suffering tremendously, but he kept surrendering it. *"But not my will, but yours be done."* There was so much trust that he knew that the Father had good things in mind, that the Father's will was the best, that the Father's way was the best way.

And I think that this can become a real game changer for us, because there are places where our struggles are not going to go away right away. This retreat isn't about, "Hey, here's the three steps to experience healing in every single area of your life." That would be three steps to heaven because heaven is really the only place that we are going to experience freedom from every kind of pain and suffering. Here on this earth Jesus even says, *"In this world you will have trouble, but fear not for I have overcome the world."* We see in the life of St. Paul, we hear him talk about things like there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Not pain, not death, no height, no breadth. No principalities or power can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus. And even St. Paul was able to find strength in his weakness. And he said, *"Through Christ I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*

What we need to find friends is Jesus who is living within us. This is a very deep mystery of our faith. That we are not actually ever alone. That we are not ever left to our own strength. We are so small. And I realized this more than ever in this time of this pandemic. Are we not so fragile as human beings that one tiny virus can have this much effect on our entire planet? We are so small, so fragile. And it's only when we allow ourselves to lean in and depend on a God who isn't weak, who isn't fragile, who is strong and powerful and He has the resurrection power to raise up the dead things within us, to change everything that changes us. And it changes our perspective.

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There's many things that I've been going through that I can say are very hard battles, but when I'm able to quiet myself and to center on Jesus who is within, that the power of the risen Christ is living in me and he is living in you. That there is nothing, nothing that can truly harm us. That even in our pain and suffering, that we can find comfort and strength there. These are powerful things.

I want to tell you a story. This story is one of my favorites. I love the "Narnia" series written by C. S. Lewis. And if you haven't read it, it is even as an adult, you can go back and read these stories and they are wonderful. I particularly love the story of "The Voyage of the Dawn Treader." It's like the third or fourth book in the series. And there's these children. If you haven't read the books, there's these children and they go to this amazing new world called Narnia. And there, there is a whole kingdom of animals that can talk and people and trees. All this stuff it's just like a magical, magical place. And there is a King there and he is a lion and his name is Aslan. And he is the Jesus figure in the story.

So these four children, they go on this huge boat called the Dawn Treader and they bring their cousin and his name is Eustace. Now Eustace is a brat. He is just, Oh, he's so difficult. He's so annoying, he's so prideful, he thinks everything is about him, he constantly complains, he is a thorn in everyone's side, he thinks he's better than everybody. And when they're on this boat, they end up on this island and everybody is working to fix the boat, but Eustace thinks he's too good for this.

So he wanders off and he finds a little place where he can take a nap. And when he goes to this place, he finds all of this treasure and he finds this gold. Well, it's really like a huge bracelet like an arm cuff, but he's a kid. So he puts it up around his arm up here and he falls asleep and takes a nap. And when he wakes up he realizes that he's not just in a cave, but he's in the dragon's lair and the cuff has gotten really, really tight on his arm and it's digging into him. And he walks over to the water and he's really confused about what's happening. It just feels very strange. And when he looks into the water and he sees his reflection, he realizes that he's turned into a dragon. A huge, ugly dragon and he doesn't know what to do. He is so afraid. And all of these days go by and he can't figure out how he's going to get back to being a boy. He's so disgusted with himself as a dragon. He won't eat in front of anybody else because it's just so disgusting.

And I realized that that's an experience that most of us have these places that are so ugly on the inside. And for Eustace, he was so ugly on the inside. All of these parts of him that were simple and prideful and yak, and it was like suddenly it was all on

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the outside. It was exposed for everybody to see, but most importantly for him to see because before everybody could see it, but him.

I know for me there are lots of places in my heart that need to be transformed and they're really not lovely parts. They're parts of sin and brokenness, places where I desperately need the love and healing power of God to come in. And we all have those places because we're all sinners. We all have fallen short of the glory of God. We all have places within us that need to be transformed by the beauty of God. He is beauty itself.

Anyway, so back to the story. Eustace is stuck as this dragon and then one day Aslan the lion shows up and he says, "Eustace, come follow me." Aren't those words familiar? Jesus has said, "*Come follow me*," in the Bible many times and he says it to us. So Eustace follows Aslan and he's this big dragon just following along this lion. And they end up in this big watering pool. And Aslan says, "You need to go in there "and wash off this dragon suit basically that you're in." So Eustace goes in and he starts scratching at himself and some of the scales fall off, but it's not even making a dent. He's still a dragon. He can't change it himself.

And Aslan says, "You're going to need to let me do it Eustace." And Eustace allows Aslan to come in to take away the dragon. And Aslan takes out a sharp claw and he reaches over to Eustace and he just rips through and Eustace says, "It was like he ripped into my heart." And he experienced all this incredible pain because Aslan was ripping through layers and layers and layers of this dragon suit. It was layers of ugliness, layers of all of these places that weren't really who Eustace was. And I know for me there are places in me and I'm sure in you too where we have so many layers that we've put on top of ourselves. Maybe it's even to protect ourselves. And it's not even who we really are anymore. Maybe because we've been hurt so much that we put up walls of coldness, walls of being stern and uncaring, walls where we don't trust, walls where we like to give everybody the impression that we have it all together. That we know everything, that we're better than other people, that there's nothing that can touch us. These are all places that cause this whole facade to occur. It's not even really us anymore.

So Aslan just reaches through with his claw and cuts through all of these layers until this whole dragon suit just falls off of Eustace. And he's just a boy again. And his skin is soft. And Eustace after that experience was completely changed. He was kind, all of his selfishness fell away. It was like he had new eyes and a new heart. It wasn't just the suit that fell off, his whole heart really had been ripped open to finally love. All the coldness had been stripped away. And I think that this is like a

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beautiful story that talks about surrender. Eustace had to allow Aslan to do the work. He had to admit, come to grips with that he couldn't fix it himself. That he couldn't figure it out. And he had to let Aslan do the work.

And I think that this is so similar for us in our relationship with God. That there are so many things that we try to fix ourselves, there's so many things that we try to cover up, make it seem better than it is. We try so hard, we hustle, we work and it's good. It's good that we put in effort. God isn't opposed to our effort, but we have to be open to His grace. It isn't just about us. We need to cooperate with His power, with his resurrection, with the miraculous. We have to surrender and open our hearts to accept this great gift who is Jesus himself. And this is when things can change.

There is a place in us that finds it so hard to just let it go. And sometimes we have to be faced with a lot of difficult things. We have to have a bit of a breakdown before we can experience breakthrough. Some people will say, "Yeah, I just need to hit rock bottom." Well, I don't know if we always need to hit rock bottom, but there is a certain place where we need to come to the end of ourselves and just say, "I can't do it. Lord, I need you."

There's a beautiful song by Matt Maher called "Lord I need you." I'm sure that you've heard it. It's all over the place this song, but it's such a cry of the heart. I've sung that song so many times and I've prayed that prayer so times because it just feels true. Everyday it feels true. There's so many times throughout my day where I just say, "Lord, I need you. Every hour I need you. Moment by moment I need you." It's okay to say, "I don't have what it takes." Because it's in that place that God can be strong for us.

I love this quote by Father Jacques Philippe from the book "Interior Freedom." All of his books are amazing. He is a spiritual master. If you want to get into some good books, I highly recommend him. But he said, "This is why humility and spiritual poverty is so precious. It locates our identity securely in the one place where it will be safe from all harm. If our treasure is in God, no one can take it from us. Humility is truth. I am what I am in God's eyes. A poor child who possesses absolutely nothing, who receives everything, infinitely loved and totally free. I have received everything in advance from the freely bestowed love of my Father, who said to me definitively, 'All that is mine is yours.'"

We never have to wonder if God is going to be generous with us. It's all He knows how to do. We never have to wonder if God is going to hold back from us. He

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doesn't know how to do that. It's not in His nature. His nature is generous, His nature is love and His nature is giving. A constant pouring out of Himself. He has no need to hold back from you. He has no need to withhold anything from you. And it's only up to us like we are the ones who are usually holding back. We are the ones who are usually closed. And for many of us, I don't say that to shame us as if it's your fault. A lot of that comes from wounds from our past where we've been hurt. Where people have taken advantage of us and have caused us harm. And so it causes us not to trust. It causes us to close up. We don't know a love like that on this earth. And that is a place that God wants to heal us.

He wants to transform our understanding of what real love is. His love is faithful. It's free. You don't have to do anything to earn it. You don't have to do anything to find it. It's right there. And God will meet us where we are. It doesn't have to take a long road back. It's not a whole bunch of hoops you have to jump through. He is always there welcoming us with open arms. And we see that in the story of the prodigal son where the father is already watching for the son to come home. He's already has his eyes in that direction. He has his eyes in your direction. And I think there's something incredibly healing about knowing that the gaze of God is already on us. This has been something that I've been meditating on now for a couple of years. Is just coming into the awareness that even right now the gaze of God is upon you.

So when you go to pray and you quiet your heart and you lift your eyes entirely to God, He's already looking at you. He's already loving you. And for us to just find our comfort and strength there. To have a place where we can just let it go. It's so hard and exhausting to keep it all together. Isn't it? It's so exhausting. So exhausting giving the facade that we're doing fine. I hate that. When I go to places, even a church foyer and I walk in the door and people are like, "Hey, how are you?" And everybody goes, "Good." You're busy but good.

Not really. Most of us aren't good. Most of us have a whole whack of things going on in our hearts that are hard. We have a lot of joys of course too. It's not like our lives are pure misery, but all of us have places of struggle. Good, busy, good. That says nothing about the real hearts of what's going on truly for people. We need a place where we can come into the presence of God, where we can let it go. We don't have to say we're good where we can be honest. Where we can open up all the places where we feel small, where we don't know what to do. And that is where we encounter Jesus. He's always waiting to encounter us. This is such a beautiful, beautiful thing. And I don't know if we take the opportunities often enough to meet with him.

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We want to experience healing? It's not like we take a pill. It's the encounter over and over and over again with the person of Jesus. It's in his presence where we are healed. In his presence we are set free. In the presence of the spirit brings freedom. It says, "Where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom and scripture." When we welcome the presence of God, we cannot help but be changed. And I would say very specifically, when we spend time with Him in the blessed sacrament at mass or in adoration, that it is very, very important that we spend time in the real presence of Jesus. And this can also happen in our hearts and other places, but there's something very, very special about spending time within the presence of Jesus.

So, friends allow yourself to become little. Don't be afraid. Go there, allow yourself to rest on the heart of God. Allow Him to father you in the places where you feel small. He will not let you down. He is faithful. May God bless you.