

*People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. [Mark 10:13-16]*

Every weekday during Lent we will send a passage of Scripture and a brief meditation. For the most part these will be drawn from *The Social Justice Bible Challenge*, edited by Marek P. Zabreskie (published by Forward Movement, 2017). However, as the stories and photographs from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida leave us speechless, I have turned to this passage from the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus' embrace of children expresses the impulse we all share: to hold our children and assure them that they are blessed; to shield them from danger and fear; to promise that we will make this a world where each of them has incomparable value. There are no words for what we feel this day. We hope beyond hope that our children of Grace will know that you are the center of our lives, and we hope beyond hope that our parents know prayer surrounds you as you talk with your children about safety and grief and hope. We renew our own commitment to be a community where faith replaces fear, a community that advocates tirelessly for justice. And while survivors watch the news in hopeless silence, while hundreds--perhaps thousands--grieve the deaths of their own children and parents and partners who have been massacred by gun violence, and while lawmakers utter glib excuses for inaction, we ask ourselves what we must do to keep Jesus' promise that the time has come for innocence to thrive.