

Like holding God's hand

By [David Williams](#)

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When you bring kids up front in a worship service, it's a bit like opening your sanctuary to a band of foraging raccoons.

You never know exactly what's going to happen. Things are going to be...interesting. Time with children is one of those peculiar things in the church, something fraught with liturgical peril for those who like services nice and neat and orderly. But it can also be totally amazing.

I love it, the wildness of it.

What amazes me is just how often those encounters with our little ones force me to do some significant theological digging. Like this last week, when at the end of the time with children, they circled up for prayer with the elder leading it...and she graciously included me in on the circle. The two next to me in the circle are fast friends, and there was a very brief whispered debate about who would get to hold my hand.

"But I'm right next to him," said the one.

"I know, I know, but I want to hold his hand," said the other. "It's like holding God's hand."

They settled in quickly so that they could pray along in our little circle, too quickly for me to come up with anything insightful in return, but those words stuck with me as they scampered off following the prayer.

Like God's hand? Me? They're talking about me? Gads.

Knowing myself, and knowing the frequently disheveled state of my soul, it was one of those convicting moments. Too often, my spirit is like the sink in my kitchen, overflowing with pots and pans and crusty dishes that really should have been cleaned after dinner the night before. But no sooner have I cleaned them, than suddenly that sink is full again.

Sort of like Camus' first swing at writing the [Myth of Sisyphus](#), which if memory serves me involved dishes. Or maybe it was laundry. Or some combination of the two.

It can be a particular pastoral challenge, that expectation that we are the conduit to the sacred. It can morph into the assumption that we are perfect, the Vessels of Truth, the very Voice and Hands of God. It can be a seductive and dangerous thing for the human ego.

No matter how often we doth protest that no, we are truly no different, it can be hard to get past the desire to see us as stand-ins for the Creator of the Universe.

Which, er, I'm not. Yes, I do my best to help. Yes, my vocation is guiding folks to deeper connection with our Maker, and I have disciplined myself to try to. It's a path I myself still journey, and I appreciate the company I've found along the way. But I don't want to confuse people into thinking that I am the Holy. Ever.

And yet I also found myself thinking, as we sat for those few moments in prayer, that the strange weight placed on my soul by that dear little voice was a good weight.

Are we acting in such a way that our hands are serving God's purposes? Are we speaking in a way that our voices proclaim both God's justice and God's gracious love?

It's the weight that pretty much everyone who follows the Nazarene should feel.

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