



Day 17

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

—MARK 10:16 (NIV)

Reflect

Imagine yourself when you were 6 years old. Do you remember what you were going through when you turned 10? Remember how you felt at 16? Do you remember your dreams at 21? All those versions of who you used to be are still inside of you. Your 7-year-old self still gets excited when you remember the joy of that day. Your 35-year-old self still wants to cry when remembering the pain of that year. Like a nesting doll, every version of you has been a part of you becoming who you are today. Some versions of you went through some terrible and painful experiences and some felt great joy. But all versions of you were held by God.

Respond

Draw a nesting doll or stick figures of you growing from young to old (or from smaller to taller if you don't like growing old). Who have you become? Who do you carry with you?

Blessing for stretching your heart

*For when life is too many things.
Awful. Lovely. Full. Shockingly incomplete.*

*May you live with it's absurdity,
a life that's working out just fine,
AND gone to hell in every handbasket.*

Let today be an exercise of yes...and.

*Yes, you have so much to be thankful for,
and this is not what you imagined.
Yes, there are moments of joy,
and, you've lost more than
you thought possible.*

*Yes, you want to make the most of today,
and your body keeps breaking.*

*Yes, you are hopeful,
and this is daunting.*

*Yes, you are trying to be brave,
and you are also quietly terrified.*

*So, blessed are you,
living awkwardly between yes...and.*

*May you see this as life's work.
Where it takes courage to live,
where grief strips you to the studs
and love can remake you again.
Where your heart can be shattered
and still beating.
Never sorry to break at all.*

Yes...and.

*May you be capable of absurd joy,
ridiculous love,
audacious risk,
and even fear,
as your heart stretches to hold
this gloriously messy yes...and today.¹⁷*

¹⁷ Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie. Adapted from "For Stretching Your Heart" in *The Lives We Actually Have: 100 Blessings for Imperfect Days*. (New York: Convergent Books, 2023). 18-19.