

Story inspired by the themes and teachings of Mark 9:36–37, 42 and Mark 10:13–16.

## “The Small Hands”



The community center sat between a boarded-up grocery store and a barber shop that still smelled like aftershave and nostalgia. Every Tuesday evening, its lights flicked on just as the sun dipped low, and that night was no different.

Raymond stood near the entrance, clipping name tags to lanyards. He was tall, soft-spoken, and always seemed to be listening for something beneath the noise of the room.

Bobby came in late, as usual, coffee in one hand and phone in the other.

“Please tell me this meeting’s not another ‘vision casting’ thing,” Bobby muttered. “I barely survived the last one.”

Jimmy followed behind him, carrying a crate of donated toys; some missing wheels, others missing pieces, but all clean.

Raymond smiled. “No vision casting. Just kids.”

Bobby looked up. “That’s what I’m worried about.”

## A Disruption No One Asked For

They were halfway through setting up when the doors burst open and a group of kids rushed in laughing, shouting, chasing each other with the reckless joy only children have.

A little girl in a pink hoodie nearly knocked over Bobby’s coffee.

“Hey...careful!” Bobby snapped before he could stop himself.

The girl froze, eyes wide. She whispered, “Sorry,” and backed away.

Raymond saw it instantly.

He walked over, knelt down to the girl's eye level, and said gently, "What's your name?"

"Lena," she said quietly.

Raymond held out a name tag. "I'm really glad you're here, Lena."

Her face lit up.

Jimmy watched from across the room. Bobby looked uncomfortable.

Raymond stood and addressed the room. "Hey, everyone. The kids are not the interruption tonight. They're the reason we're here."

Bobby crossed his arms. "They're loud. We had an agenda."

Raymond didn't argue. He just said, "Sometimes the smallest voices matter most."

## The Weight of Carelessness

Later, during snack time, Bobby noticed a boy, no older than eight, sitting alone with his sleeves pulled over his hands.

Jimmy sat next to him. "What's your name, champ?"

"Marcus."

Jimmy slid a juice box across the table. "You okay?"

Marcus shrugged. "I don't like messing up."

Bobby overheard this and felt something tighten in his chest.

Jimmy gently said, "Who told you that you mess things up?"

Marcus hesitated. "People."

That word landed heavy.

Jimmy glanced at Bobby. Bobby looked away.

Raymond joined them. "Marcus, you're not a problem," he said calmly. "You're a gift."

The boy blinked hard, like he wasn't sure he'd heard right.

Raymond continued, "The way adults treat kids sticks longer than we realize. We can lift them, or we can weigh them down."

Bobby swallowed. He remembered his tone earlier. He remembered how Lena's face changed.

## A Hard Conversation



After most of the kids left, Bobby stayed behind.

"Ray," he said quietly, "earlier... with that girl. I didn't mean to..."

"I know," Raymond said. "But intent doesn't erase impact."

Bobby exhaled. "Why do you take this so seriously?"

Raymond leaned against a table. "Because when we dismiss kids, shame them, ignore them; we teach them something about their worth. And that lesson can follow them for life."

Jimmy nodded. "Hurting a kid's spirit doesn't leave a bruise you can see, but it's just as real."

Bobby stared at the floor. "I didn't think something small mattered that much."

Raymond smiled sadly. "That's the thing. It matters because it's small."

## Open Arms

The next week, Bobby arrived early with cookies.

When Lena ran in, he knelt instinctively and said, "Hey, I'm really glad you're here."

She grinned and took his hand without hesitation.

Raymond watched from the doorway as Bobby helped kids with homework, listened to their stories, and laughed loud enough to be heard across the room.

At the end of the night, Bobby said quietly, “I get it now.”

Raymond raised an eyebrow.

Bobby continued, “If we say we care about faith, about people, about doing what’s right then how we treat the smallest, quietest ones shows if we actually mean it.”

Jimmy clapped him on the shoulder. “Welcome to the truth.”

Raymond looked around the room; crayons scattered, toys half-packed, kids full of joy, and smiled.

“Sometimes,” he said, “the kingdom shows up in small hands and open arms. And the best thing we can do... is not get in the way.”

## Moving A HEADD



That night, the community center lights went out as usual-but something lingered.

A reminder:

- That welcoming a child is never a small thing
- That careless words can wound deeply
- And that protecting, honoring, and embracing children is not optional; it is sacred

Because what we do for the least seen among us, we do for something far greater than ourselves.