

Permission Granted

Luke 18:15-30

Well, as you can see we and the church survived another year of Vacation Bible School. The culmination of this week and our passage fit well together. As we think about children, maybe some of these quotes will bring a chuckle or maybe some inspiration or perspiration.

Children are like wet cement; whatever falls on them leaves an impression.

Our children are the only possessions we can take to heaven.

Excuse the mess, children are making memories.

Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man. ~Rabindranath Tagore

Boy, n.: a noise with dirt on it. ~*Not Your Average Dictionary*

A little girl is sugar and spice and everything nice — especially when she's taking a nap. ~Author Unknown

A child is a curly dimpled lunatic. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

In America there are two classes of travel — first class, and with children. ~Robert Benchley

Children are one third of our population and all of our future. Panel for the Promotion of Child Health

Children in a family are like flowers in a bouquet: there's always one determined to face in an opposite direction from the way the arranger desires. ~Marcelene Cox

Having a two-year-old is like having a blender that you don't have the top for. ~Jerry Seinfeld

While we try to teach our children all about life,
Our children teach us what life is all about.
~Angela Schwindt

As the father of two young girls, I have come to the realization that they are just as messy as boys but the dirt that they create around the house is comprised of at least 50% glitter. ~Andrew K. Keller

There are only two things a child will share willingly — communicable diseases and his mother's age. ~ Dr. Benjamin Spock

A rose can say "I love you",
orchids can enthrall,
but a weed bouquet in a chubby fist,
yes, that says it all.
~Author Unknown

Any kid will run any errand for you if you ask at bedtime. ~Red Skelton

There's nothing that can help you understand your beliefs more than trying to explain them to an inquisitive child. ~Frank A. Clark

Psalm 127:3 “Children are an heritage from the Lord.”

Turn to our passage in Luke 18:15-30. Our passage today is actually in two parts. The first is about children seen in verses 15-17. In verses 18-30 we read the second which is about a rich ruler. Both have to do with eternal life. So I want to divide it up in this way. This is what we see.

The essence of eternal life
The effort for eternal life

I. THE ESSENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE –
v. 15-17

You have probably heard the saying that children should be seen and not heard. It is an idiom that

came out of the Victorian age when propriety was the expectation for children. At that time children were considered of slightly more value than property and were therefore expected to remain silent in the company of adults. They were to do as they were told without question and that meant obey and be silent. In the late 1600's John Locke wrote that the mind of children was a blank slate void of reason and knowledge. They were considered to have no valid opinion of their own and were discouraged from engaging in public discussions. They were to listen and learn without question.

A book titled *Table Rules for Little Folks* admonished children to sit still, be patient, "not speak a useless word," be polite and clean and leave quietly when meals were over. Interrupting a conversation was forbidden because the children were expected to merely listen quietly and learn.

Notice in our passage a request from parents.

A. The Request From Parents – v. 15a

It was customary in Jesus' day for parents to bring a child to a Rabbi for a blessing. We might call it a baby dedication today, but the idea was the same. From Mark's account of this event we find that once again crowds had gathered around Jesus. We can imagine that it was more than a handful. "People were bringing babies to Jesus."

The word "bringing" is an imperfect active voice in the Greek, meaning that they kept bringing. There were a whole lot of them.

I want to camp on that thought for a moment. These parents kept bringing their babies to Jesus. It was a continuous action. I want to suggest here the responsibility, the importance of bringing children to Jesus. Now maybe most if not all perhaps had no clue that Jesus was the Messiah, they may have only believed that He was a great teacher and Rabbi and came for the blessing. We know better. The Word

of God tells us that He was more than just a Rabbi. He is the Son of God, the Christ, the one who died for our sin. How important it is for us to bring children to church so they can hear about God's love through His Son Jesus.

For most of you your children are grown and they have children or maybe their children have children. Let me stress how important it is that you encourage your children to take their children to church to learn about Jesus. And I want to say this, if they won't then you should if you can. How else will they hear? Make it a regular habit. Yes, it may be inconvenient to drive out of your way to pick them up, but think about the eternal ramifications. Maybe you have some neighbor children who don't attend. Can you bring them?

Our attendance this year for VBS was a little lower than it has been in the past. There could be a number of factors for that. Every year I ask the Discipleship team and I'll ask them this year – is it worth all the effort? Sure we get some kids who attend other churches – any VBS will have that. But we also get some kids who don't have any church affiliation or other exposure to the gospel. Is it worth it? The resounding answer is YES. Why?

I did a little research this past week. According to the World Population Clock we are just under 7.5 billion people. Approximately 1.9 billion are under the age of 15. Every 7 seconds a child is born. Every 13 seconds there is a death.

In the Neigh's most recent missionary letter they noted that in 2014 CEF had direct ministry with 19.9 million children around the world, an increase of 27.6% from 2013. That's 38 children hearing the gospel every minute. Now CEF is only one ministry among others reaching children, but there are 100 times that number in the world.

A number of years ago Barna Research Group did a poll in which they surveyed 2,600 adults who

indicated to be born again Christians. They were asked age they were saved. Here's what they found. "For years, church leaders have heard the claim that nearly nine out of ten Christians accept Jesus as their Savior before the age of 18. If that statistic was accurate in the past, it no longer depicts U.S. society. The Barna study indicates that nearly half of all Americans who accept Christ as Savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%), and that two out of three born again Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday. One out of eight made their profession of faith between 18-21 and one out of four after their 21st birthday.

Of those who became a Christian before their teen years, half were led to Christ by a parent. Another one out of five were led to Christ through a friend or relative. Only 7% were saved through the prompting of a pastor and only one out of eight through some special event. Now, how many of you were saved as a child?

Here's my point. Sometimes a church will look at what will get the biggest bang for the evangelistic buck. Some might argue that if only one in eight come to Christ through some special event, then maybe we shouldn't do that event. While we're at it, let's also get rid of the pastor because only 7% of children may be saved through his efforts. But I say it does matter. If we only had eight children in VBS and one got saved. It was worth it for that one.

If we started evaluating success based on numbers, every year we would be trying something new. That's not to say that trying something new is wrong. It can be easy then to lose the focus of bringing children to Jesus.

What does our passage say? Parents brought their infants to Jesus. Let's do the same. Let's make sure they are learning about the Christ who loves them and died for them and our response in return to Him – to love Him and live for Him.

Last year I attended a meeting of the Livingston County Youth Council. It's a grassroots effort to meet the needs of children in our community, especially those falling through the cracks. It's a commendable idea, but I think they're going about it all wrong. They are using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as their model for helping reach the marginal kids so that each child has an opportunity to achieve

If you're not familiar with Maslow, his model presumes five levels of needs which states that people are motivated to achieve certain needs in a particular order. Unless and until needs are met in one level you will not advance to the next level. His theory called the first few steps "deficiency needs". He contends that 1) they motivate people when they are unmet, and 2) they must be met before progressing to the next level.

The first level is physiological in which basic needs like food, water, warmth, and sleep are met.

The second level is safety. It's where physical and emotional needs are met through security and shelter.

The third level is a sense of belonging where you feel valued and in relationship with family, friends, and community. It's the ability to find resources, to feel empathy from someone and know they care.

The fourth level is self-esteem in which the person gains confidence, self-respect, responsibility, a level of resilience with opportunities to stretch, make mistakes and learn.

The fifth level is self-actualization. It's the ability to pursue your talents and goals, to dream and seek personal growth.

Glaringly absent in this model and in discussion at the youth council is the importance faith plays in the development of the child. Didn't Jesus once ask "What is it to gain the world and yet forfeit your soul to hell?"

Folks, we can meet all the tangible needs of food and shelter and intangible needs like emotional well-being to the point of developing a great self-

esteem where they are ready to take on the world, but unless we help bring them to Jesus, unless we bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, we have failed them. What else can we do?

But a problem developed as we see in our text. Some didn't like children being brought to Jesus.

B. The Reaction By the Disciples – v. 15b

“When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.”

Of all people, the disciples were the ones who reacted negatively by rebuking parents from bringing children to Jesus and we don't have a clue why. The word rebuke means to blame or sternly reprimand or sharply scold. It also is in the imperfect active voice meaning they kept on rebuking parents for interrupting Jesus.

Maybe they thought Jesus was too busy ministering to the sick and demon possessed to be bothered.

Maybe they thought He was too important to spend time with children.

Maybe they thought He needed a break and they were trying to clear the crowds away so He could get some rest.

Maybe they thought the children were a bother or that they were interrupting His teaching.

At one church where I pastored I remember sitting in my office working on a message and getting a knock at the office door one day. It was a mother and her young daughter. She told me that her daughter wanted to come see me because she had something to tell me. They came in and had a seat and she told me that morning she asked Jesus to be her Savior.

Folks, there is nothing more important than that. I gladly welcome that.

For some reason the disciples felt like they needed to keep children away from Jesus, that in some way they were a nuisance. So how did Jesus respond?

C. The Response By Jesus – v. 16-17

Mark's account says that Jesus became indignant. He was upset with the disciples for turning the children away. He told them to allow the children to be brought to Him. He loved children. He would soon die for them as well. So what did Jesus mean when He said that “the kingdom of God belongs to them”?

Did he mean that all children would go to heaven? Did he mean that only children would be in heaven? The answer to both of these is no. Children must come like anyone else, by faith. Consider briefly the nature of children and the essence of eternal life.

There isn't any life more fragile and dependent than the life of an infant. A baby is totally dependent on others to care for its every need. It can do nothing on its own. Though a baby doesn't understand it or realize it, he or she has complete faith in that person who cares for him or her.

John MacArthur sums it up. “No one better illustrates the reality that only the lowly who have achieved nothing of merit enter the kingdom than infants. No one has achieved less morally, and religiously than them; no one has less knowledge of or obedience to the law, or less devotion to God. Thus infants perfectly illustrate the principle that God saves sinners apart from their achievements. Babies neither understand the law nor practice it, and were thus incapable of performing any meritorious works with which to earn salvation.”

What is the essence of eternal life? The bottom line is that like an infant you must become totally dependent on someone else for eternal life. You must realize that heaven cannot be attained by your own efforts.

We must come to Christ in humility.

We must come with expectation and excitement.

We must come realizing we are insufficient in ourselves, totally dependent on Christ.

There isn't anything that you can do. The essence of the gospel is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. How do we know that? We find the answer in the next section. Here we see the effort for eternal life.

Before we move on, I want to again emphasize to you the importance of bringing children to Jesus. We have that responsibility. Ephesians 6:4 "Fathers, do not exasperate (provoke) your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Proverbs 22:6 "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

The word "impress" means to leave a mark or an imprint. Impress Christ on their hearts by bringing them to Jesus, bringing them to hear about Jesus.

II. THE EFFORT FOR ETERNAL LIFE – v. 18-30

If heaven is made up of people who have trusting faith like a child, who come offering nothing of their own, how does someone get into heaven?

A. The Request – v. 18

A person of some importance came posing a question to Jesus. He had an honest quest with an honest question. He came to the right person. But right away, you can see some concerns. He begins by identifying Jesus as a good teacher and then asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. The first concern is in how the man addressed Jesus. He called Him a good teacher. What did he mean by that?

Jesus wanted to know as well and stated that there isn't anyone good but God. You see, no Rabbi was ever called good. He may have thought Jesus was in good standing with God based on all the miracles He had done. The title was one that placed Jesus above the other Rabbis and put Him on equal ground with God, since only God is called good.

So Jesus wanted to know why the man referred to Him as good teacher. If God is the only one that is good, did he mean that he recognized Jesus was also God in the flesh? And if he believed Jesus was God, then was he willing to obey?

We have to answer that question as well, don't we? If we believe Jesus to be the Son of God are we willing to obey Him and His Word? If we believe that He is deity, why do we then disobey?

Let's look at his question for a moment. "Good Teacher, what must I do..."

This is the second concerning thought we notice. In the Jewish mind eternal life was something you received because you did something. It was a works based salvation and he was hoping he was on target. Every world religion except Christianity is based on something you have to do. You hope in the end that the good outweighs the bad, that the scale is tipped to the good side. What must I do?

But there was a third concern in the statement he made. It's about inheriting eternal life. Jews also believed that eternal life was something you were given. If they did enough they would inherit eternal life. It was theirs by virtue of being a Jew, by keeping the law, because they were given the law and the Temple. Eternal life was an inheritance.

In verses 19-22 we see the reaction.

B. The Reaction – v. 19-22

Jesus lists several of the 10 commandments. They are 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. They are commandments that pertain to how we treat others. Jesus isn't saying that obedience to the law merits eternal life.

Romans 3:20 "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."

Galatians 2:21 "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Galatians 3:21 "Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the Law."

Jesus was asking the man to take inventory of his life in comparison to the law. The standard of the law is perfection and no one can keep it. If we keep the law and yet offend in one area, writes James, then we are guilty of the whole law. (James 2:10)

That was Jesus' point as we see in our text. The man willingly admitted that he had kept all those laws, and kept them since his youth. He had lived an admirably pious life according to him.

But then the proverbial shoe dropped. Here it comes. I wonder if the guy knew what was coming. Maybe he thought Jesus would commend him for such an admirable life and bless him on into heaven. Instead Jesus said that he lacked one thing. It's like going into a performance review thinking you're going to get a raise and you are told your pay will be frozen till your performance improves.

It is at this point that Jesus adds the 10th commandment. It's the commandment that tells us not to covet and insinuates greed for what others have or hoarding what we own. That's where the man failed. He was unwilling to see his own sin. He was sincere in keeping the law, but only the law

he wanted, not the whole law and therefore because he was guilty of one sin he was disqualified by the standard of the law to earn heaven.

Jesus told him to go and do something a covetous person would not do – get rid of his riches by giving it to the poor. It's not that he would be saved by giving it all away. It was a test to show the man his true heart and that he was not perfect.

The Jews looked at riches as God's blessings. If you were rich God must have thought well of you. They also considered giving alms to the poor was key to the kingdom of which the rich had an obvious advantage. They could afford to give more. In the Apocryphal book of Tobit (12:8-9) "It is better to give alms than to lay up gold: for alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin. Those that exercise alms and righteousness shall be filled with life."

If you give you will get heaven and this rich ruler stood at the crossroads. What was more important earthly riches or eternal life. His actions reveal his heart. He was unwilling to do that much. He was unwilling to give it away because his heart was covetous. Sadly we see his refusal.

C. The Refusal – v. 23-25

He came with a question: what must I do to be saved? He made the decision that he would rather keep his riches and went away unrepentant. And Jesus responded that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven, meaning that riches often become the barrier that keep people out of heaven. Try as you may you will never get a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. But it doesn't have to be riches. It can be a hobby.

It can be a relationship.

It can be a job.

Anything can become a barrier that can keep you from eternal life. It can cloud the mind to what is

truly important and in his mind wealth was a greater desire than eternal life. “What is it to gain the whole world and forfeit your soul in hell?”

What must I do to have eternal life? He asked. It’s the question that many ask on their quest to eternity. Yet when he was told to do something he refused, he was disobedient.

So who then can be saved? That’s a good question.

D. The Response – v. 26-30

What is impossible with man in that there is nothing we can do to earn eternal life, is possible with God. We can’t save ourselves – that’s impossible. But God can save us – with Him it is possible. We are incapable of satisfying God’s righteous demands. Only the righteousness of Christ who then shed His blood taking our sin on Himself, has satisfied God’s holy demand. Salvation then comes by God’s grace through our faith believing that what Christ did on the cross is the requirement for eternal life.

We must have a correct assessment of the Savior, understand our own sinful condition and respond in repentance. That’s what happened in Acts 2. Peter had just preached in the Temple courtyard to thousands of worshippers. When they heard the message about Christ scripture says they were cut to the heart and asked what they had to do to be saved. Repent and be saved.

Here’s the thing. It’s not at all what we do; it is about what has already been done for us. The rich man’s sorrow was not a sorrow that led to salvation, but there is a sorrow that leads to salvation. II Corinthians 7:10 “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” The rich man had worldly sorrow.

The eternal life he was asking about was the same life that is promised to those who believe in Christ.

That is the reward for those who have given up things to follow Christ.

Modern times have brought us many comforts
People live in wealth and luxury
But the Master still asks the question
Lovest thou Me
Lovest thou Me
More than these?

Lovest thou Me more than these My child
What will your answer be?
O precious Lord
I love Thee more than all of these
More than fame,
More than wealth,
More than the world.

CLLI 1292471

The essence of the gospel is to have the faith of a child, totally, completely trusting in the finished work of Christ.
The effort for the gospel was done by Christ on the cross.
Let’s bring the good news to others.

Some of you may know Jim Ryan. He was the first High school student to break the 4 minute mile. He later became a two term Representative in the House for Kansas. He and his wife love the Lord. His wife passes out copies of Our Daily Bread to kids who come to Jim’s running camps or when she is in the airport or to cashiers or cab drivers. She even leaves them in the Capital chapel.

Can we bring more people to Jesus? The message is urgent and the time is short. Don’t hinder them from coming, help them come to Jesus. You have His permission.