

48. Childlike, not childish

September 25, 2016

Here are a few things we all have learned from raising our children collectively:

- A 4-year-old's voice is louder than 200 adults in a crowded restaurant.
- Don't let your child throw baseballs up when the ceiling fan is on.
- Marbles in gas tanks make lots of noise when driving.
- Always look in the oven before you turn it on.
- If your child is very, very quiet, it is not a good sign. He is doing something that you may not like.
- Right after your boy flushes the toilet and he says, "Uh oh," you'd better go see right away.

There is nothing like a child's laugh that disarms anyone who hears it, even the grumpiest old man would smile. But no one cares to listen to a child's temper tantrum in the middle of a grocery store, especially in the long distance airplane, because you don't have a parachute. It is one thing for a child to throw a fit like that, but it is a completely different thing for a grown up to be childish.

Our Lord Jesus teaches us to have faith like a young child who puts complete trust in one's parents. In His teaching, we see an undernote that warns us that we should not behave in a childish way as we grow mature in the Lord.

A. BEING OBEDIENT TO THE LAW

Matthew 17:24-27 When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.

Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

Can you imagine what kind of fish story Peter was going to tell to all of his friends after this catch? "Once I caught this big fish with a mouthful of money."

Being a former tax collector, Matthew was the only one who recorded this miracle in his Gospel. But he was affirming our Lord's kingship through the miracle.

What a paradox! The King of kings was too poverty-stricken on this earth to pay the annual temple tax which was only a half-shekel. Our Lord Jesus laid aside His majesty and glory and riches to come to set us free from our slavery to sin and death. What a gracious God we have!

Hebrews 2:5-6 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?"

B. WHO IS THE TOP DOG?

Mark 9:30-37 Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. 31 For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and

they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.” 32 But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. 33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” 36 Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 37 “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”

Again, Jesus explained about His impending death and resurrection to His disciples. While they nodded their heads in pretense, but their hearts were in complete confusion.

However, they were not grieved enough to set aside their personal dispute over which of them was the greatest. Perhaps the fact that Peter, James, and John had gone on the mount with Jesus had added some fuel to the fires of competition. They might even have said, “Jesus told us not to tell you guys, but we know something that you don’t know because we are special.”

It seems that this was the favorite debating topic among the disciples. They all agreed that Jesus should take over the world as “King Messiah.” There was no argument for it, but the debate was about who was going to be the second-in-command.

In v35, Jesus clearly tells us how to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God, we must be the servant of all. This is opposite of what the world tells us. In the worldly idea of power, the great man is distinguished by how many people serve him. But Jesus declares that true greatness is shown NOT by how many serve us, rather by how many we serve. It is not that Jesus hates ambition. Rather, he teaches us to have the right kind of ambition. It is the ambition to serve others.

The apostle Matthew recorded an additional comment from Jesus regarding this:
Matthew 18:3-4 and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Why did Jesus say that they could not even enter the kingdom? Because accepting the fact that we need Jesus as our Savior demands humility and total trust in God in our part instead of the prideful thought that we can make our way into heaven.

When Jesus said to them, “become as little children,” He didn’t mean that we should be childish, but we should have childlike faith. The reasons for the example of the little children Jesus is using are:

1) They are trusting their parents.

They don’t think twice about if the parents are going to be there or not.

2) They are completely defenseless, so they know that they have to depend on their parents.

3) They have simple faith, unlike the faith of grownups.

We come up with all the silly reasons and goofy logics to hinder our faith in God.

It is actually very easy to despise the humble. In this world, people consider them as losers – the kind who will never make it in our competitive and aggressive and get-ahead-at-all-cost world. Yet when we despise humble people, we also despise Jesus. We should not follow the marching orders of this world, because our Jesus is the Humble King.

C. THE KING WHO IS PROTECTIVE OF THE LITTLE ONES

Matthew 18:5-6 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. 6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Can you feel the intensity in the voice of Jesus here? He takes it seriously when one of His little ones is led to sin. This "little ones" does not only mean children, but also those who humble themselves as children in the manner Jesus described and the new believers in the Lord.

This is not just for those who teach the Bible to others. If you've been with the Lord for some time and you are an example to new believers to follow, whether you want to be or not. What you do and say is a living statement of how-to-follow God to them. We ought not to be stumbling blocks, but stepping stones for our young believers to grow and mature in the Lord.

D. WHATEVER IT TAKES

Matthew 18:7-9 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! 8 If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Of course, the Lord is not commanding literal physical removals, since He had already made it clear that sin comes from the heart. What He is teaching here is that sin is to the inner person what a cancerous tumor is in the body, and it must be dealt with drastically and decisively.

If you have a problem with pornography and you have subscriptions for those skin magazines or cable TV channels, cancel them. Whatever it takes. And you are thinking, "I am gonna lose money on them." Really? Is that your best excuse? Jesus is telling us to be radical to follow Him. As I've said many times, any dead fish will float down the stream, but it takes a live and determined fish to go against the flow.

E. NOT MUCH LOVE FOR THOSE ARE NOT WITH THEM

Luke 9:49-56 Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side." 51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, 52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah

did?" 55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

This must have been frustrating for the disciples, because it showed that other followers of Jesus were able to cast out demons when they could not. Perhaps John was trying to impress Jesus with his zeal for protecting His name, but the Lord wasn't impressed. The believers who think that their group is the only group that God recognizes and blesses are in for a shock when they get to heaven.

When the disciples desired to call down fire from heaven upon them – as if they could, Jesus showed them that His mission was not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Being like Jesus means being merciful to others, whether that person is an unbeliever or a person from a different denomination, instead of being harsh with them.

Speaking of Christian denomination, it is not from the Lord. Men created them, because they couldn't get along mostly due to pride, selfishness, and demonic influences. Yet the Lord is using them for His glory. Calvary Chapel is not a denomination, but it has the power and presence of a denomination. Now that the founding pastor Chuck Smith has passed away, you watch, there will be more frictions amongst the churches within Calvary Chapels. And it will split just like many other denominations have gone through, if the Lord tarries His rapture time.

F. GOD'S SEARCH FOR ONE SHEEP

Matthew 18:10-14 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

When God compares the believers as sheep, it is not a compliment. Actually, sheep are dumb and defenseless. When was the last time you have seen an attack sheep with a pair of snarling fangs? They follow one leading sheep wherever it goes even to death. If you've noticed, the sheep was not looking for the Shepherd, it is the Shepherd who looks for him. It is God's search for men.

Jesus emphasizes the love and care we should have for all in the Christian community, especially for the young babes in the Lord. The first temptation to those who have been in the Lord is to brush them off or ignore them or even despise their faults or sins as if we don't sin. They need to be nurtured, cared for, encouraged, and guided according to the Word of God, not our own legalistic mindset. Please remember that Jesus loves those new babes in the fellowship as well as sinners outside of the church.

God and the heavenly angels rejoice for each new believer being found by Him.

Luke 15:10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Our pride incubates the sinful desires within us.

The only way we can deal with our pride is submitting ourselves to the will of God instead of ours.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

2) If Jesus took the lowest position and became the servant of mankind and died for our sins, is there any reason we should not follow His example by serving one another?

Christianity is not about coming to church and reading the Bible. That is only a part of it. It is becoming more like Him.