

**September 6, 2009**

**“A Child-like Faith”, Mark 10:13-16**

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Children are trusting beings by nature. To a child the world is fresh and new and they cannot even imagine the existence of any thing or any one being evil. Statistics prove that the earlier someone is brought to God, the more likely they are to remain with God for the rest of their lives.

253 Christians were polled about when they came to faith in Jesus Christ. Of those 153:

138 came to faith under the age of 20

85 came to faith between the ages of 21 to 30.

22 came to faith between ages 31 and 40.

4 came to faith between the ages of 41 and 50.

3 came to faith between the ages of 51 and 60

1 came to faith between the ages of 61 and 70

And none came to faith over the age of 70

We are told that every year two million graduating high school seniors leave churches never to return. The future of the church is dying because older members are not disciplining the youth of our churches. Parents leave it to the church, if at all. The members of the church leave it to the pastor, and the pastor leaves it to the youth director.

As we look at this story in Mark we see something about the character, the personality of Jesus. That character, that personality was one of warmth, acceptance, and genuine caring. Jesus must have had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye for children to readily come to him. How often do we inadvertently turn children away because of a scowl on our faces or a grumpy disposition?

As we said a couple of weeks ago, in Jesus' time children were nothings. Children were the property of their parents and could be misused and abused without any fear of the law. So, when these parents brought their children to Jesus, the Apostles were just following the custom of the day. The point here is that as adults we should never, ever do anything to keep our children from church, whether it be overtly or covertly.

In the eighth grade I had a friend named Jim. He was a brilliant kid, a science junky. One day while visiting he asked me why I went to church. I shared with him as best as an eighth grader could about my faith. The next Sunday I was shocked to see Jim at church. For the next two months, Jim never missed church. Then one Sunday he did not show up. The next day at school I told him that I missed him at church and he replied, “I won't be coming any more. As I was getting ready to go to church my dad told me that there was no God, that church was a waste of time, and no child of his was going to believe in fairy tales.”

Other times parents are just too lazy to bring their children to church or they come up with the excuse, “I will let my child grow up and decide for himself whether he wants to go to church.” Parents like that are nothing more than outright hypocrites for if they truly believed that then why don't they let their kids grow up and see if they want to go to school? Why don't they let their kids grow up and decide if they want to go to the doctor or not? Why don't they let their kids grow up and decide if they want to take a bath or brush their teeth? Children are indeed like a scientific vacuum and we know that nature abhors a vacuum. Your children will either be filled with garbage or faith in God.

We base a good part of our doctrine of infant baptism on this passage of Scripture. To those denominations who say, “You must first be a grown up to make a conscious decision about God,” I would ask if there was one of these children who came to Jesus who consciously knew what was going on? Of course they didn't. Jesus didn't say, “Well, first you have to make a confession of faith before I will bless you.” So the

Sacrament of Baptism is a perfect example of God's grace. The child does nothing, doesn't even come on his own power, yet God receives him.

A church that does not have committed and active elders in Parish Ed and Parish youth is a church that will die soon. A one person education committee, as we have right now says a great deal about our commitment to youth. It is a tragedy that we have no one on our Parish Ed. Committee. We talk about children yet we refuse to give some time. Shame on us.

The spiritual education of our youth begins in the home with parents who are committed to Jesus Christ and who attend church with their children. It continues with parents who share faith at home on a daily basis with their children. We all talk to your kids about sports, school work, band, but honestly how many of us sit down and share our faith with our children. And when a parent tells me, "Well, I don't share my faith with my kid because my kid thinks I'm dumb," is only using that as a dodge. Your children look up to and respect you. You are your children's heroes. They want to know what you think and what you believe and when you fail to share that you fail your children and you fail the mission of the church.

In church every adult here is a witness for Christ. Most of us are so busy looking up here that we neglect who is down there. One Sunday we were sitting in our usual spot in church when about five minutes before church started Head Usher, Henry Reichow, tapped me on the shoulder. I looked at him and he said, "I want to see you in the narthex." I followed him wondering what church law I had broken. When I got to the back he said, "John didn't show up, we need you to usher today." To be acknowledged by an adult in church made me feel wanted and accepted. Do you make children feel wanted and accepted here? Do you say, "Hi," do you even smile, do you pat a child on the head as he walks by, do you even acknowledge their existence? If not, start today or one day there will be no Sunday School and no church here.

It is our obligation, it is our duty, it is our joy to receive these little ones in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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