

Meeker Christian Church
October 20, 2024
FOR THE LOVE OF CHILDREN

A little boy wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with Twinkies and a six-pack of Root Beer and he started his journey. When he had gone about three blocks, he met an elderly man. The man was sitting in the park just feeding some pigeons. The boy sat down next to him and opened his suitcase. He was about to take a drink from his root beer when he noticed that the man looked hungry, so he offered him a Twinkie. The man gratefully accepted it and smiled at the boy. His smile was so pleasant that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered him a root beer. Again, the man smiled at him. The boy was delighted! They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word. As it grew dark, the boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave, but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the man, and gave him a hug. The man gave him his biggest smile ever. When the boy opened the door to his own house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked him, "What did you do today that made you so happy?" He replied, "I had lunch with God." But before his mother could respond, he added, "You know what? God's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!" Meanwhile, the elderly man, also radiant with joy, returned to his home. His son was stunned by the look of peace on his face and he asked, "Dad, what did you do today that made you so happy?" He replied, "I ate Twinkies in the park with God." However, before his son responded, he added, "You know, he's much younger than I expected."

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. The recent weeks and my medical issues have resulted in so very many acts of kindness from you. Among my very favorites was one of those acts of kindness – at the Homecoming parade I was reminded to smile! Someone cared enough to remind me of something I want so much to practice because it reflects the sincere joy of serving the King of Kings. Thank you Amber for caring and encouraging me, I immediately did and felt better!. People come into our lives for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. Embrace them! The regular practice of forgiveness – I mean like Jesus forgave you – unconditionally – with a smile, encouraging word, and or a scripture will change your witness and your life – but YOU have to put on the attitude of Jesus to do it.

This summer we have had an unprecedented number of visitors. Many are checking us out. God has inspired them to attend. And their families, their spiritual gifts, experiences are brought here for a reason. We declare you welcome, ever so welcome! Help us help you use those talents for God's purpose and glory. Sunday School is on my mind. Evelyn and helpers have it established and we are ready to move forward. Do not be shy, step up and be counted. We have been praying for you. Here is a theme scripture for today: John 17:15-19 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As

You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

This is a direct quote from the mouth of Jesus as he speaks of Christians that they are to live in this evil world, but be set aside after the example of our Lord Jesus because of the truth revealed for righteousness through the Bible.

FOR THE LOVE OF CHILDREN is my sermon title today. In a world where more and more children are abused in every conceivable way, many times only valued for how they can be exploited - Christians must be proactive in protecting these innocent ones from conception to maturity. We and they are of this world, but are not to be of this world. That is what the church is all about. Providing a sanctuary of Righteousness and it takes everyone of us all the time or expect to be judged with the sin of commission by not being proactive,

James 4: 7 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. or the sin of omission by pleading ignorance. Luke 17:2-3 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3 Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

You who have chosen Jesus and His righteousness are the soldiers of the cross living FOR THE LOVE OF CHILDREN. You have chosen correctly and will be personally rewarded by God, but have also provided for the children under your tutelage and also have the opportunity to make the correct decision for Righteousness and eternal life.

The wondrous innocence of a child raised in a secure loving home is apparent in this cute little story from a policeman: "While taking a routine vandalism report at an elementary school, I was interrupted by a little girl about six years old. Looking up and down at my uniform, she asked, "Are you a cop?" "Yes," I answered and continued writing the report. "My mother said if I ever needed help I should ask the police. Is that right?" "Yes, that's right," I told her. "Well, then," she said as she extended her foot toward me, "Would you please tie my shoe?" Somehow I think that is what God meant all along for policemen to be doing in a world dedicated FOR THE LOVE OF CHILDREN.

Our congregational leadership is very proactive planning and providing a safe and secure atmosphere for kids to experience the love of Jesus. It is everyone's responsibility. We are doing all we know and understand to protect our children and youth and give their parents and guardians assurance we are doing so and always open to further suggestions to improve.

Every year when I speak of our commitment to youth and children's ministry, you hear me say that I believe the most important ministry of the church is to provide facilities and dedicated workers for the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of our kids. Everyone of you has a part in this ministry whether you work with children and youth or not. Prayer, watchfulness and reporting to an elder or staff person any situation that

could endanger a child or youth or put them or their sponsors in any compromising situation.

II. The Children's example:

Matthew 11:25-29 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. 26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Let's be frank - the reason we have public education is to train children because they are most receptive to teaching at those tender ages. Any criticism that can be offered regarding the church trying to control children or adults for that matter can be directed many times more toward any other educational system, television, movies, music. Kids don't produce that trash, greedy, unprincipled, sin controlled stuff, adults do! Which lessons are going to train citizens that will build up a nation and which will produce citizens that will destroy a nation? Why is the world so filled with hate to the point of suicide bombers, kids killing parents, peers and every imaginable form of violence? Because that is what they see, hear and are taught from childhood! Perversion and violence are learned habits from the environment in which they are raised, I do not believe they are genetic predispositions. The children's example is to do what they are taught. And we take that very much to heart in every aspect of the MCC ministry starting with the ten commandment: Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

And right on in to the New Testament:

Matthew 15:4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

Ephesians 6:1-2 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

Proverbs 23:22 Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.

We will pause for a moment on this next verse for me to explain:

Matthew 10:37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

If someone loves parents more than God, or children more than God, then their love is selfish, seeking what the relationship is good for. To agape, unconditionally love God to start with is the right parent child relationship under righteousness...unconditional love. It is right back to the beginning, love God then you will know or learn how to love others...

Finally your personal example--make it a high priority on your prayer list to pray for our children, to be an active part in providing the best possible atmosphere in which to "train up a child" in the way and wonder of God and righteousness... When you walk the hallways of this facility pray for the children and their teachers, look for ideas and ways to enhance our children and youth outreach...

If you are willing to do that - then tear off the bottom of the bulletin, date it and sign it and put it in your wallet, your purse, a pocket, day timer or something to remind you of your proactive choice to be a part in providing a safe haven for children, **FOR THE LOVE OF CHILDREN!**