

“LOVE—THE LITTLE CHILDREN!!”

August 23, 2020

I John 3:1-2, 16, 23–24a;

INTRODUCTION—A father of five was busy picking up his kids’ toys in the front yard—and he said to his neighbor, **“you know, since I’ve been married, I’ve learned the meaning of those words in the bible, ‘when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1**

I. WE ARE ALL: GOD’S CHILDREN!! (I John 3:1-2)

- A. *If*—we believe in Christ—John 1:12 (“*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become Children of God.*”)
- B. *If*—we believe he died for us—I John 3:16 (“*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.*”)
- C. Then—He will live in our hearts—Eph. 3:16a-17 (“*I pray... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...*”)
- D. And—He will transform us—
 - 1. I John 3:2 (“*But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him .*”)
 - 2. That is what *the Day of Pentecost* meant for the disciples of Jesus. Before the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples were frightened people. When Jesus was arrested, they all fled! But—40 days later, they boldly told everyone they met that “*Jesus is Lord!!*”
 - 3. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” (Romans 12:2, niv) The Bible promises to give us all—new minds in Jesus Christ ! ! !

II. SO— HAVE A CHILD-LIKE FAITH: as GOD’S CHILDREN!!

Jesus said in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 10:15) — “*anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.*”

A. Not a childish faith! There’s a big difference! A childish faith is foolish and self-centered: “Jesus, I pray that you’ll bring me 10 pounds of chocolate! !”

A child—like faith is just a:

B. Simple, un-complicated faith—to simply trust Christ! To guide us, to lead us, and direct our attitudes

C. We exercise faith every day—we believe the floor will hold us up!!

D. We have faith (most of the time) — our ca will get us places!

I was hurrying to the Methodist Ministers' Spring Banquet one Thursday evening a few years ago. Been busy with Bible school, with visiting and so on. I was headed up on a tall ridge, and was about half-way up, when my engine started coughing and sputtering, grew weak, and started to die. I fussed—“What could be wrong? I had it tuned a few months ago. It’s only a year old!” I shifted down from 4th gear to 3rd gear, but the engine sputtered more! Then—I looked at the fuel gauge. I remembered it was low on the day before, and I had *forgotten to fill the gas tank!! I was running out of gas!!! What could I do??!!* With simple faith, I prayed for the Lord to see me through. I signalled a left turn, and turned the car around, and headed back to the Exxon station a mile away!! The engine finally died— but I shifted the manual transmission into neutral, and coasted down the hill (at the speed limit, of course), coasted past a quarry— fortunately, no one was in front of me. I knew I only had one or two good pumps on the power brakes to stop me! As I approached the Exxon station, I *pulled hard on the now powerless steering* to turn into the gas station, and pulled up in front of a gas pump—hitting the *now-powerless brakes to stop me just in time!!*

E. God honors a child— like faith!!! (Just don't tempt the Lord with things like that too often!!!)

III. AND-LOVE OTHERS: as GOD'S CHILDREN!! (I John 3: 16, 23)

A. Love others for Christ's sake!! I John 3:16 says—> “*Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. and we ought to lay down our lives for each other.*” And in vs. 23—> “*And to love one another as he commanded us.*”

B. That means: telling others that we love them!!

1. A boy climbed high into a tree, and refused to come down. His parents could not get him to come down for dinner; when the father tried to climb up and get the little guy, he climbed higher, too high for the father to climb! They tried everything they could think of, including threats, bribery, and warnings!!
2. Finally, they called the boy's pediatrician, and told him all they had tried: “We told him he'd fall and hurt himself. We told him owls would peck his eyes out! We told him he'd catch cold and get very sick. We've tried everything!!” The doctor said: “Did you tell him simply that you loved him and wanted to be with him??”
3. They called the doctor back a few minutes later to say the boy, who had waited five hours in that tree, had come down— when he heard what he needed to hear! 2
4. We need to tell each other—*that we love one another!!*

IV. AND ALWAYS KNOW-JESUS LOVES: GOD'S CHILDREN!! (I Jn 3:16)

A. Always—point the children—to Jesus!!! (Mark 10:14-16)

1. That was the main goal of Vacation Bible School!!
2. That should be the goal of Sunday School every week!!

B. Remember—Jesus knows his children's names!!!! (Mark 10: 16)

CONCLUSION—At the Powell United Methodist Church, there are many talented people. One was Tom Guttridge. Tom was a very talented actor, as well as a teacher, and knew the “*Sermon on the Mount*” by heart. So my friend, the then-pastor, Charles Burnett, arranged for Tom to give that monologue one Sunday morning, in full dress as Jesus, completely unannounced to the congregation.

That morning, Tom waited for the 11:00 worship service to begin, and he dressed quietly in the pastor's office: beard, long hair, and robe. He looked authentically like Jesus! About 11:25, he walked out in the hallway, where he could listen for his cue at about 11:35, to come into the sanctuary and deliver the “*Sermon on the Mount*.”

Susie was a six year old girl, whose family attended that church faithfully. She had left her parents in the balcony to visit “the little girl’s rest room” and was just backing into the restroom when Tom came down the hall! She froze in the doorway, and Tom, recognizing Susie, spoke to her: “Good morning, Susie! How are you? How are your parents? How is your brother and sister?”

Forgetting why she came downstairs—(you think Usain Bolt was fast in the 2012 Olympics?!). She ran like her life depended on it, down the hall, up the stairs, into the balcony, tumbling over people to reach her parents: “*Mommy!! Mommy!! I’ve just seen Jesus!! And he knew my name!!*”

Let me tell every one of you this morning: Jesus knows your name!! Don’t ever forget that!!! Don’t ever doubt that!!

SO—ASK HIM TO GUIDE YOU!!! ASK HIM TO DIRECT YOU!!! ASK HIM TO LEAD YOU — to LOVE and SHOW KINDNESS to EVERYONE ELSE !!!

ENDNOTES

1 Michael Green, ed. *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: BAKER, 1982), p. 44.

2 (Doran's) *MINISTER'S MANUAL*, 1982 (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 130.