

Scripture Reading:

Luke 18:15-17 “15 Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.””

“Children of the Kingdom”

This morning we will cover a very short passage in Luke’s Gospel. It may be the shortest I have tackled in our 64 sermons, but the subject is certainly near and dear to all of our hearts here at Church of the King

It directly relates to the account of the rich young ruler which follows, but trying to cover both in one week would have been overwhelming or I would have left a lot out!

I will be borrowing much of the material in today message from Pastor Rich Lusk who has written a thought provoking book we have given to our families entitled, “Paedofaith: A Primer on the Mystery of infant salvation & a hand book for Covenant Parents,” so I want to give him credit up front!

- **Once again, the Disciples get things very wrong: Rebuking those who brought infants to Jesus**
- **Jesus corrects His disciples and goes on to bless the very children they would have turned away**
- **Jesus then says that we must receive the Kingdom as a little child or infant**

IF we are going to see how little infants lead the way into the Kingdom then we are going to have to make sure we do NOT make the mistake of turning away covenant children as the Disciples did...

As we study this important passage we should focus on three questions:

- **Are children born to Christian parents in God’s covenant?**
- **How are we to treat our covenant children?**
- **What are we to expect from our covenant children?**

Pastor Lusk aptly puts it in our modern terms when he says that, Lord-willing, we must learn “it takes a Church to raise a covenant child!”

God has richly blessed our small congregation with a host of covenant children!

Those who have taken our membership vows have covenanted in part to...

“train and educate any children God may give me in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord, including them in the church’s two sacrament of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”

With that vow we answer YES to the first question about our children being in the covenant and this morning will be a good opportunity for us to review and reflect on what all of this means for us and our covenant children

- **First, to anyone familiar with the Old Testament it should not have been surprising to see Jesus take these covenant children up into His arms and bless them.**

Consider the many places where God speaks about His covenant faithfulness:

Genesis 6:18 “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark--you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.”

Deuteronomy 7:9 “Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; ...”

Isaiah 59: 21 "As for Me," says the Lord, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the Lord, "from this time and forevermore."

- **God is emphatic that children of the covenant are HIS children:**

Ezekiel 16:20 Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured.”

Malachi 2:15 [speaking against divorce] “But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.”

And we need to understand that these verses are not talking about only adult children or children who have been converted in the modern American sense of the word:

- **Listen to these passages in the Psalms where it is obvious that God places the seed of saving faith in His elect children even from the moment of their conception:**

Psalm 22: 9 But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God.”

**Psalm 71:5 For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth.
6 By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my
mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You."**

**We could go on to look at the many promises made to Abraham or Psalms 8, or
Psalm 139 and certainly our favorites 127 & 128, but I think you get the picture.**

**And so, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let the little children come to ME, and do not
forbid them!"**

Jesus said, "Of such is the Kingdom of God – So were these little infants saved?

- **A good question!**
- **We are saved by faith...**
- **This saving faith is NOT something we do: Rather it is a gracious gift from
God!**
- **As part of our lesson last week we reviewed the first part of Ephesians chapter
one and asked the simple question about who was doing the doing?**
- **Paul goes on in Chapter 2 to say clearly "8 For by grace you have been saved
through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works,
lest anyone should boast.**

**Peter says the promise is to you and your children... Just what we have seen
throughout the Old Testament**

**We trust God for our salvation and we must trust HIM for the salvation of our
children**

- **This is fundamental to our having the right understanding of who our children
are**

**The passages we read from Psalms 22 and 71 are not just exceptional experiences for
King David:**

- **They are now part of God's Word that our children study and in the church's
hymnbook that we use in worship...**
- **Those are not things a child should read and think, boy I hope someday this is
true of me!**

In Psalm 128 our children are called Olive Trees, not weeds!

**Now we need to be very clear here: We are not saying or teaching that all children
born in Christian homes go to heaven: Being from a Stoos will not help any of my
children or grandchildren get to heaven!**

- **They too must receive the gift of faith and trust in Jesus!**

This leads us to our second question:

- **How are we to treat our covenant children?**
- **At their baptism and in our membership vows the parents, and we as their helpers, covenant to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!**

We must remember that these are God’s children who have been entrusted to our care:

- **At their baptism, the child is handed to the church and given a new name, but he or she is then given back to the parents to be raised in a Godly home.**

The reformer Bucer said it well, “If we do not expend the greatest pains and effort in bringing our children up to obey Christ, then we are guilty of robbing God of His children. In effect, we hand them over to Satan”

Or as Jesus told the disciples in an earlier encounter with children: “It would be better that someone hang a millstone around your neck and cast you into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.”

- **THIS is why knowing who our children are is SO important:**

Thankfully, it is NOT our job to instill saving faith in the heart of an infant that as a child of Adam is born dead in their trespasses and sins: That is an impossible task and all attempts we make would fail and bring only despair.

- **I can no more save one of my children than I could save myself!**

We know from the promises and revelations in God’s Word we have reviewed that our covenant children are also saved by Grace:

- **David said he trusted God from the womb, what Pastor Lusk calls infant faith or Calvin referred to as the seed of faith.**
- **Here is where the “intellectual” or “rational” mindset of our modern times gets in the way...**
- **Saving faith is first & foremost a trusting faith, an obedient faith and as it matures it becomes a believing and testifying faith.**

Allow me to use little Mitchell as an example: Does Mitch love and trust his mother?

He sure does and he demonstrates it every day in the way he responds to Vanessa: A picture of saving faith as he is totally dependent upon her for his health and life!

IF I bring Mitchell up front here can he explain to us what it means to be loved by a faithful mother?

Our toddlers might be able to make a child-like attempt at explaining this

Our young adults could cite chapter and verse as they fully explain why they should love and honor parents.

- **In the normal course of life, their understanding of this love grows, they can explain it more fully**

Just because little Mitchell cannot explain the loving relationship that he has with his mother DOES NOT mean that he and his mother do not have a loving relationship!

Such is also the case with how our covenant children trust in God:

-- Mitchell cannot explain today what it means for Jesus to be His Savior... -- In a couple of years he will join the young ones who gave answers to simple catechism questions at camp

- **When Mitchell is a young man, Lord-willing, he will serve Jesus as his Lord and Savior and be able to give a strong defense of his faith**

So the job of the parents is not to “save” the child but to nurture the child: The parents role is much more akin to that of a pastor who is shepherding God’s flock than to a missionary who is preaching the good news to the heathen.

- **This is a VERY important distinction...**

In many American churches they are waiting for the children to “make a decision for Christ,” looking for some point of conversion.

- **But when we look at the Bible, we see that we are called on to disciple our children, not to evangelize them!**

Which of these we believe will have very significant and practical impacts with regard to how we raise our covenant children!

For example, one of the greatest preachers of the 19th Century Charles Spurgeon resisted the Biblical doctrine of infant baptism saying, “children do not need to be brought to the fount, they must be brought to Jesus”

This sounds reasonable, but it assumes they are lost and must be saved before they can be baptized

On the other hand because we believe God’s promise of salvation for covenant children, Pastor Lusk rightly points out, we must bring our children into the presence of Jesus in every way that we can!

- **We bring them to Jesus at their baptism!**
- **We bring them to Jesus each week as we respond to God’s call to worship**
- **We bring them to Jesus each and every week here at the Lord’s Table**
- **We teach them to pray to Jesus**

- **We teach them to study and believe God’s Word that Jesus said testifies of Him!**

We do all this because we believe that our covenant children have been given the gift of faith as we are told in the Psalms and that they were blessed by Jesus as we see in our passage this morning!

- **Because of this we bring them to the church to be baptized into the Name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit**
- **Now they are marked as God’s children and given all the covenant blessings He promises**

If we do NOT see them as being in the covenant, then it changes how we approach all these same things:

How can they respond to God’s call to worship if they do not have ears to hear? Should they leave the room when the absolution sins is pronounced? *Perhaps this is why “Children’s Church” is so popular!*

Even in family worship how can we teach them to sing, “Jesus loves me this I know” if they are not in the covenant?

[fortunately most parents do anyway because they are not consistent with this bad theology!]

They are barred from the family meal when we are gathered as God’s Saints, because they are not members of the family

We cannot honestly teach them to pray the Lord’s Prayer, because how can they rightly say “Our Father” when they are not yet members of the family?

[again few are consistent here!]

We cannot encourage them to have a morning devotion where they trust what they read in God’s Word: *What is they found one of those passages in the Psalms?*

If our children are not saved, then all of these things must be approached as we would with a pagan from work that showed an interest in the Faith:

All of our efforts must be centered on evangelism until they make a profession of faith and then they can be baptized...

- **Then they can come and be fully engaged in our covenant renewal worship**
- **Then they can participate with us at the Lord’s Table**
- **Then God will hear their prayers**
- **Then they can read the Bible claiming all of the promises of God for them in Jesus!**

I hope you can see that who we think our children are, greatly impacts how we treat our covenant children

And that brings us to the final question: What are we to expect of our children?

Again Pastor Lusk puts it well, “Children from Christian homes should grow up to be Christians!”

God has chosen to have many of His covenant promises run through the lines of covenant homes bringing blessings to a thousand generations

This does not mean that every child born in a Christian home is elect, just as God did not elect all twelve of the Lord’s disciples

- **However, we must judge God’s intention toward our children from His revealed will and not His secret decrees.**

This is the point being made by Jesus: The Disciples turned the little children away: Jesus corrects them, takes the children and blesses them

In Matthew we read that “Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

- **This is God’s revealed will for our children!**

We should not be looking for them to be converted, we should be trusting God that they will grow and mature into who they already are!

Here is where American revivalism makes it very hard for us to think Biblically:

Those outside the covenant must be converted: They must bow the knee to Jesus as the great Syrian general Naaman had to do for his leprosy to be healed or as we see the entire city of Nineveh doing when they repented in sackcloth and ashes.

- **Those within God’s Covenant, including our covenant children are to be disciplined!**

We need to remember that ALL baptisms are really infant baptisms: It is the beginning of our Christian walk whether we can explain what is happening or not:

- **The whole point that Jesus makes in this passage is that we must be like these infants: Totally helpless and dependent on others as we begin our Christian life.**

Some might point to the Apostle Paul as someone in God’s covenant, as a circumcised Hebrew, who certainly needed to be converted and in fact was converted on the road to Damascus.

Well, consider this testimony from Paul Galatians 1:15...

**“But when it pleased God,
who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...”**

- **King David is another person who certainly had ups and downs in His Christian walk!**

But he proclaimed in Psalm 22:9

“But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God.”

That was true for David, and now it is part of God's Inspired Word where each of EVERY one of our covenant children can read it and claim it as God's promise for them!

As I said earlier, our covenant children are called Olive trees not weeds.

- **A mighty oak began as an acorn, not a popsicle stick!**
- **A mature bull began as a calf and not as a toy dinosaur!**

We should NOT be looking for our covenant children to be converted into something that God promises they already are!

- **We should be trusting that they grow up into mature and God-fearing Christians who know God's forgiveness and love**
- **We expect this because that is who God says they are and it is our responsibility to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!**

As I have often said, we have greatly distorted the picture of what a Godly testimony is: [give examples]

You will search the Scriptures in vain trying to find such a conversion story coming from a covenant child!

There are NO New Testament accounts of confirmation so children can be full members of the Church

However, you WILL find the Scriptures full of the stories about those who were faithful to their God:

The God of their youth!

We can think of major figures like Enoch, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, or David and Nehemiah.

But we must not forget those who we know little about: Jael whose tent peg killed Sisera , or Jesse who fathered King David

There are also some whose names we don't even know like the mother of the Prophet Isaiah or the parents of Simeon!

I want to close with one New Testament figure that we are given some information about and suggest that young Timothy should be the model of how we strive to maintain covenant faithfulness here at Church of the King:

Paul reminds faithful Timothy of HIS testimony: *II Timothy 3:14,15* “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

- **May God grant us generations of Timothy’s along with the faithful parents and grandparents needed to raise them!**

Paul also makes it very clear what type of testimony brings him joy:

“I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, 5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.”

May God grant us many Timothy’s!

Communion Meditation:

Exodus 12:21 “Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. 22 And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. 24 And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. 25 It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. 26 And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' 27 that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' “