

Our Very Best Chance
Matthew 19, 13-15
Bill Floerchinger, Lay Leader
August 17, 1008

Opening: This is a first for me. To stand before you on a Sunday morning to share my thoughts on a subject very close to my heart.

Children.

When Pastor Dave asked me to deliver a message this Sunday, I was kind of at a loss as to the subject. It was right after Vacation Bible School and I had been here each day and heard the most beautiful sound in the universe. Children laughing and singing. That sound guided me to the scriptures read here.

When I started to put together my thoughts I dragged out all the old books we had in our house. This old family bible was given to Margaret by her Mother. It was printed in 1879. Needless to say the words are quite different but their meaning is the same. (Read Mathew 19: 13-15) And now from The Message written in contemporary language.

Did you know there are over 150 verses in the Bible dedicated to Children?

In 2nd Timothy 3:14-15, “ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it. And, how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Page 2

I found in my own life that this is true.

When I was a young child in grade school in the 1930's, we lived 17 miles from town. We didn't get to town very often. The Pastor of our church came out to the country school once a month and preached and taught Sunday school. That was when I learned the Ten Commandments and what they mean to us. Rev. McCorkel was a very unusual man. When he would write scriptures on the black board he'd start with his left hand and continue with his right hand and you couldn't tell the difference.

Also, he played a game with us. He asked each of us to pick our favorite verse in the New Testament. He would call on one of us and we would give him the chapter and verse. And then he would tap his forehead and recite the verse. He had memorized the New Testament.

I don't know: As part of your training, are you required to memorize the New Testament? I didn't think so. I looked in the Discipline and didn't find it. However, in my research I looked in the Discipline handed down from my grandmother. It is for the year 1864. During the Civil War.

Catechise the Children in Sunday School. Sermon in a Sack. After looking in the dictionary it is a summary or test of religious doctrine.

Page 3

In my research about children, I found some passages that make me very concerned. These passages were written over 2000 years ago, yet they very much are happening today.

Lamentations 2: 11-12 My eyes are spent with weeping: my stomach churns: My bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people, because infants and babies faint in the streets of the city.

They cry to their mothers, "where is bread and wine?" as they faint like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mother's bosom.

Lamentations 4: 3-4 Even the Jackals offer the breast and nurse their young, but my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst, the children beg for food but no one gives them anything.

Now think of the pictures you have seen of the babies starving in Darfur, where hundreds die every day without bread and water. At the same time this starvation and death is going on, there are thousands of tons of food and grain being exported and sold for the enrichment of the ruling class in Sudan. Humanitarian Aid that is given to them from other countries has been robbed by the government to be sold or given to the army.

Page 4

Ron and Donna Shaad were here a couple of weeks ago. They had been on a VIM trip to Nicaragua where they saw real poverty. Ron said that it was estimated that 10,000 men, women and children were living on the garbage dumps where they scavenged for food to eat and other things to sell to earn money.

We can name any number of places where this is still happening around the world. Corrupt governments are starving their own people.

Now let's look at another injustice against our children

In 2 Kings 4-1 Now the wife of a member of the company of prophets cried to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead; and you know that your servant feared the Lord, but a creditor has come to take my two children as slaves.”

In this verse the widow has no means of support and cannot repay the debt. The selling of children into slavery in such circumstances was apparently common.

Nehemiah 5-4; Also talks about a shortage of food that led to large-scale debt slavery of children.

We can probably think of numerous instances where this is happening right now. For instance in China a large number of young girls are taken to Sipan Island with promises of the parents debt reduction and money to return to China in
Page 5

exchange for working in the garment factories. The girls are forced to work 10- 12 hours a day 7 days a week and they are charged living expenses almost equal to their wages. This is a disguised form of slavery.

The worst part is Sipan is a protectorate of the US. And the garments are tagged as Made in the US.

Just week before last there was an article in the Anchorage Daily News about a raid on a meat packing plant in the mid-west.

A large number of illegal aliens were discovered working there and 30 or more were children as young as 13 working 10 to 12 hours a day for less than the going wage.

Last Monday’s newspaper reported headlines. “CHILD LABOR A GOLDEN COMMODITY” In the article it talked at length about the West Africa countries of Senegal and Guinea where children are being exploited to satisfy the demand for gold. Children as young as 4 are hired for \$2 a day to hammer the rocks into dust, hand rub mercury on the dust to collect the gold. The United Nations estimates there are between 100,000 and 250,000 child gold miners in West Africa alone.

Handling the mercury causes brain damage, tremors, retardation, kidney damage and blindness. Senegal law prohibits anyone under age 18 from doing hazardous jobs. This law is rarely enforced.

Page 6

Again the privileged ruling class highly benefits from this injustice

So it seems that over the last 2000 years we have not been able to completely stop the injustices against our people and particularly our children who cannot defend themselves.

Why are we not civilized enough to know how to prevent hunger and slavery? Why does greed and corruption still play a big part in the injustices brought against our children?

At St John:

Our Mission is to grow disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world and be a welcoming family joyfully sharing God's light.

Let me quote the first part of our mission again:

To grow Disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world...

I believe this transformation includes the elimination of hunger and slavery of our children. And if we truly are Disciples of Christ it is our obligation to become activists in the pursuit of the elimination of that hunger and slavery.

I guess the next question that comes to mind is:

Page 7

What can we do here at St John and Anchorage to help solve this problem?

Frankly, I don't have a clear answer to that question.

I know that some very simple solutions were developed for other worldwide problems.

To name two that we have become involved in:

NOTHING BUT NETS – To reduce malaria in children

PET PROJECT – To give mobility to polio and land mine victims.

Both of these have become very successful.

As David said in his sermon last week, we need a lot of passion and commitment in our lives and dedication to work on this world wide problem.

It took more than 100 years to finally eliminate organized slavery in the US. Maybe it's time to start a worldwide campaign against the greed and corruption that causes hunger and slavery of our children.

I believe that our very best chance to protect our children is to carry out St John's mission.

Amen