

Childlike or Childish?

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 00] If you have your Bible this morning, I want you to turn to Luke chapter 7.

Luke chapter 7. Jesus loved children, and he lived in a day and in a society where children were best not seen or heard, was the thought.

And Jesus wanted to see them. And Jesus wanted to hear them. And he wanted them to hear him. He said in Matthew 19, verse 13, it says, Then children were brought to him, that he may lay his hands on them and pray, and the disciples rebuke the people.

But Jesus said, Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them and went away. Jesus is serious, not just talking about it.

He's serious about receiving children, treating them right, and leading them toward Christ. And we need to do all we can as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ to welcome and nurture and to care for and to teach and to love children of the Lord.

[1 : 24] On that note, did you know we had sign-ups for Awana in the foyer? I think we have availability in the fall for children's Sunday school.

And thank God we always have an ever-growing need for a willingness to help with child care. So if you care about children, you don't only say amen, and you don't only applaud, or you don't only go along with what's being said but are willing to help, text R.C., Jeff, or Jennifer, because they'd love to have it.

And I'm not just preaching, folks. I'm telling the truth. We put our feet into action. We do it. Another time when he was with the disciples, they asked him who the greatest in the kingdom was because they were vying to be that person, that greatest in the kingdom.

And in Matthew 18, he responded and he said, Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it'd be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

[2 : 47] Jesus doesn't play, folks. He's clear. It is important that we set a Christian example before those that are placed in front of us.

And he's telling us to be childlike. Now listen, there's a difference in being childlike and being childish. And today in our passage, he shares a parable about being childish.

He is referring to the Pharisees who are the church folk. They're the religious leaders. They're the proponents of the law. And the scribes called here lawyers, but they are those who interpret the law.

They take the law that God established in the Old Testament and they interpret those laws and they made new rules on top of those and pretended as if those rules were just as important as God's law that was in Scripture.

They thought their interpretations were just as important, if not more so, than what Scripture said. And it was in that misunderstanding that they often had conflict with Christ.

- [3 : 58] They also didn't like his popularity because it took the emphasis off of them and put it on him. And so they had a tendency to stand in the back of the crowd and question, to look for some kind of hot point where they could point out something and somehow criticize.
- And Jesus knew their heart. He knew what they were up to. And so he spoke to them about it. He speaks to the religious upper crust. And he says, you're acting like children.
- Look at what he says. He says, it's in Luke chapter 7, verse 31, 32, it says this. To what then shall I compare the people of this generation? And what are they like? They're like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, we play the flute for you and you didn't dance.
- We sang a dirge and you didn't weep. Folks, it's one thing to be childlike. It's another thing to be childish. But yet that is what God calls the people of that generation.
- He calls them childish by saying they are like children that cannot play together well. They're like children that are never satisfied. And he goes on to explain how some people are never satisfied.
- [5 : 08] See, Jesus and John the Baptist came with two different approaches, but they came for the same cause. Yet most folks rejected both of them.
- He goes on to say in verse 33, for John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine. And you say, he has a demon. And the son of man has come eating and drinking.
- And you say, look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yet wisdom is justified by all her children. Now, John was quite a character.
- He was ministering and preaching on the outer skirts of town. His garments were those that reminded folks of a prophet. When scripture says he wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt, they're not exactly talking about our idea of a camel hair coat, okay?
- As we would think of today. Instead, he was wild-eyed, wild-haired, eating bugs and honey, looking like he just came from Woodstock.
- [6 : 16] And if that personally offends some of you, well, sorry. Man, he was drawing a crowd, though. And he was telling them to repent of their sins.
- He was telling them to be baptized. And he was effective at it. People were coming. Lives were changing. And the Pharisees and the Sadducees came out to see what was up.
- And when he saw them, he called them the offspring of snakes and told them to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. He pulled no punches.
- And he said that if they didn't change, that God would chop them down like a tree in Matthew chapter 3. Now, that may influence people, but it sure doesn't win friends.
- And they didn't like him. They didn't like him. He also proclaimed a coming Messiah and ushered in the way that Christ would come. And when Christ came, John the Baptist got out of the way.
- [7 : 16] Now, it's interesting, a little side note here. He was later imprisoned for his faith and was soon to be beheaded because of his boldness. And he asked his followers during that time of imprisonment to go to Jesus and ask if he was really the Messiah.
- What in the world does that mean? Because he came to prepare the way of the Lord. And he was so strong in his testimony. So why later did he question that or have them question it? And there are two possible reasons for that.
- One was that after he had been so strong and such a powerful testimony and then been imprisoned and now his death was looming, could be that he struggled some with that.

Could be that he wondered. But it also could be as well that he was taking his disciples and turning them over to Jesus. So in other words, what he was saying was, and I believe this was the point, he was telling them, go ask Jesus who he is.

Go find out for yourself who Jesus is. And it was in that kind of context with the pressure of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and their followers bearing down on Christ too, which was just the Pharisees and the Sadducees, just two political parties within the church.

[8 : 40] Just two different mindsets, some different theology, but both of them power mongers and both of them in the decision rooms of the church. And they were bearing down on Christ and that's when Christ speaks the passage that I read this morning.

Basically what he's saying is this, God sent two men. One, he sent a prophet and a paver of the way for Christ. You didn't like him. Then he sends his only son and you don't like him.

One is bold and brash and forceful. One is gentle, lowly and humble. And you want to do the opposite of either one of them, but yet their approaches are very different.

But both are of God. In other words, Christ is telling us we ought to become childlike, but instead so often we become childish. It's like children at play.

Children often when they play like to mimic life when they play. Little boys play with cars hoping one day to be able to drive. And little girls put towels on their head as if it was a veil looking forward to the day when they can be a bride.

[9 : 49] Or they play with dolls wanting to be like mommy. Or the kids play house and they pick different roles. And as they get older, they play school during the summer when they're out of school.

They mimic what they see. And the two big ceremonies in the first century were funerals and weddings.

And so that's what children saw. And so that's what they played. And Jesus speaks of children mimicking those things when they saw. They sang sad songs at funerals. Or they play a flute like the music of a wedding dance.

However, sometimes children don't play along. And Jesus is saying, John took one approach and I took another approach and this generation has accepted neither.

And if you accept neither, you miss the message of the Lord. I wish it was just that generation.

[10 : 55] The reality is there's a lot of good church people like us that are not receptive to the movement of God today.

We can be a lot like the world when it comes to that sometimes. We can be spiritually childish. Why are we prone to be childish?

And if you're sitting out there thinking, I'm not childish. Well, there you go. Why are we prone to be childish?

One is, it could be the expectation that we have. We expected something different. I mean, sometimes people just want it their way. And it's not that there's really anything wrong with how something is happening.

It's just not acceptable because it's not what I expected. I didn't think it was going to go this way. They didn't think John was going to continue to go after everyone's sin.

[11 : 56] That was his message. And he did it boldly and he kept on going after people's sin. We don't mind when you go after somebody else's sin. You know? I mean, you pounce on somebody else's sin.

Woo-hoo! Go at it, preacher. You get them. Get them. But when you start messing with my sin, that's when it changes. John's message was to prepare the way of Christ by helping people see the need of Christ in the midst of a culture that did not see the need for a coming Savior.

So he was the shock jock that came to wake everybody up to their need of God. John came to show them the dirt. Dirt. Jesus came to show that God will accept you dirt and all.

People didn't expect that either. The thought was that people need to clean up. You clean up your life, then you can come to Christ. But the message of Christ is that you cannot clean yourself up.

You don't have the innate ability to do that. Thank God today, I can say without reservation, you can come to Christ just as you are and he will change you.

[13 : 14] He'll empower you for change. He'll make the difference in your life. Come to Christ as you are. Christ will clean you up and some people, some good religious people, they don't like that.

I mean, they just don't like it. If Christ accepts people as they are and changes them, then that means that we're supposed to help folks that are not like us.

And we said we wanted to serve the Lord, but that's not what we had in mind. We had an idea about what we want to do. And then God puts people in our paths that's not exactly what we expect.

And I've learned many times over that when you do what the Lord calls you to do, it's not always following your expectations. it's not always going to pan out like you thought it was.

God may do a much different work than the way you anticipated it to be done. And some folks would rather trust their anticipation, let's just be honest, they'd rather trust their anticipation than they would the movement of the Lord.

[14 : 20] If you get too sold on your anticipation, you don't want to follow along with the Lord and what He's doing. And so we become childish because we thought it would be different.

Another reason we tend to act childish toward Christ, excuse me, they tend to act childish before Christ. It could be the personal problems that we endure.

For instance, children do not play good together when they're tired. we don't either. And sometimes we just get tired.

Sometimes we just get tired. It's not that we're not doing a good work. Let me give you an example. Elijah was like that. Man, Elijah was a miracle worker of God. Did wonderful things.

And then Elijah got tired. He got so tired he wanted to die and he laid down to die but God said, get up. And he gave him exactly what he needed.

[15 : 29] And I'm so thankful today that he'll do the same for us. Say, preacher, I'm tired. Well, yeah. We all get tired sometimes. And he invites us to come to him.

Come to me, all you who are weak and heavy laden. I will give you rest. You'll find rest in the Lord. He'll take care of you. Not only that, children don't play good when they're hungry.

And when they're too young to tell us they're hungry, they still have a way of letting us know they're hungry, don't they? Sometimes we get childish because we're hungry.

That usually happens to y'all about 1155. Excuse me, we started earlier than that, didn't we? That just scared the wooly out of a lot of you, didn't it?

Folks, when we get hungry for the things of the world, we're not satisfied because the appetite for the things of the world will never satisfy.

[16 : 42] It's like eating air. It's not going to satisfy. And unsatisfied people do not always go along with what God wants to do because they're unsatisfied.

And so sometimes we get childish because we like it our way. And these kids in this parable did not get invited to play a game they wanted so they didn't go along.

And sometimes the course that God has for us is different than our way. It's not exactly what we anticipated. It's not exactly what we feel like.

And we get childish about it. Another reason people act childish toward God it could be the message that we hear.

And I want to be clear about this and I'll close. The gospel is a two-sided message and you better proclaim both sides of that message or you'll have half the message filled with half truths.

[17 : 48] One side of the gospel message is that every one of us are sinners. Romans 3.23 says for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Now I want you to notice something. It says for all have sinned and fall short that verb is in a different tense and fall short of the glory of God.

The glory of God is that revealing of God. It's when he shows himself and God has made us to be in relationship with him and to amplify and be a light of his message and his truth.

And the reality is that every one of us have sinned and therefore failed to live up to what God made us for. We've all messed up.

Now you don't like to hear that. I don't like to hear that. I don't like people pointing out the things I do wrong but the reality is it's there. We're all in the same boat. Without Christ we're hopeless.

[19 : 00] And that is the message of John the Baptist. That's what he said. However, many others did not like it. It was a funeral dirge and they didn't want to play funeral.

They didn't want to hear about the death that comes from our sin. I'm thankful today there's another side of the gospel message because if there wasn't I wouldn't be here.

There'd be no need for me to tell you that you're doomed. Go home. You have no hope. Nobody wants to hear that.

You have to understand that to get the second half of the message. And sometimes you have to preach that and proclaim that and show that with more emphasis than you do the second half.

But you can't preach half the truth. You've got to preach the whole truth. Second half of the truth is that the wages or the cost or the penalty of our sin is death.

[20 : 14] And in the New Testament when it speaks of death it's not talking about the heart stopping and the brain stop functioning. It's talking about the separation that comes from death. I lost my dear godly grandmother years ago and when she died I was sad.

Why was I sad? Because she was going to heaven and her faith had become sight and everything that she had looked for now she was being fulfilled before her. No, not at all. I was sad because I was going to be separated her for as long as I live on this earth.

It was the separation that was so difficult. It was not the destination of the one that believes in Christ. It was the separation. So when he says the cost or the penalty or the wage of sin is death.

He says that it's separating us from God. But the free gift of God how many of you like a free gift? You know no strings attached you know the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now the reality is if it's a gift you can't earn it. Just a gift. It's not a payback. That's something different. It's just a gift.

[21 : 24] Romans goes on to tell us that God shows his love for us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Listen I don't want to know everything you've done.

I'm not going to tell you everything I've done. Okay. I mean look if our sins in life were like stones and the little sins and by the way we judge how big the sins are not God because they all separate us from God.

Okay. But we have a way of saying what sins big and what sins not. If I asked you to list what's a big sin and what's a small sin we could all know what that was. We understand that culturally what that means.

But even the little bitty ones sent Christ to the cross. You understand that don't you? So there's not really a difference. It all separates us from God. But let's just say that the little ones are little stones and that the big ones are big boulders and we all have a bag.

I'm going to tell you if you're half my age your bag's too big to fit in this room. We're in a mess. And nobody wants to know all that about you.

[22 : 32] But God does know it all. He knows the thoughts. He knows the things that you wanted to say. He knows the things you said.

He knows the things that you wanted to do. He knows the things you did. He knows the places you wanted to go. He knows the places that you went. And He knew all of that.

And He shows His love for us. That even though He knows all of that, He died for you. He died in your place.

So you would have hope. And not spend eternity apart from God. And the last part of that second half of the gospel truth is that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Now let me explain what that means. Confess is not just meeting with the preacher in his office and confessing that I've sinned before.

[23 : 47] confession is not just telling somebody else that you know, I believe in Jesus. I mean, I'm not going to live it out, I'm not going to make a big deal out of it and that kind of stuff.

But I mean, I believe, I believe. I'll tell you what I believe Paul's talking about because the context of when he says Jesus is Lord. Lord. There was a ceremony in the Roman Empire where people would pledge their allegiance to the empire.

They would burn incense, they would kneel before some icon of Caesar and they would say, Caesar is Lord. And when they proclaimed their allegiance to the empire, they continued to keep their rights and would continue to live and Rome was proud of their rights.

They were proud of their citizenship and they were able to keep that. But when Christians were put on the spot and they burned that incense and got to that point, they would say, Kyrios Christos, which is Greek for Christ is Lord.

And when they stood in that crucible and said that, they would lose their citizenship. They would be imprisoned. They would be exiled like John was when he wrote the Revelation.

[25 : 08] Nero would take the bodies of professed Christians, impale them, dip them in tar, and light his garden with them.

The confession of Christ is not a quiet, private, just between you and me matter. It's an open confession.

It's living out our life for the Lord Jesus Christ. And belief is not just a belief in a historic Jesus that did good things and died and rose again.

It is instead a commitment to live your life for his cause and for his kingdom. I don't know about you, but because he's changed my life, that's music to my ears.

but some don't like to dance to that tune. So may I ask, to the ways and the will of God for your life today, are you childish?

[26 : 23] Or are you childlike? are you stubborn? Are you humble? Are you rejecting what God's telling you?

Are you receiving it? Are you withdrawing in your faith? It's just between me and God. Are you outreaching?

Being a light of the world? Being a salt that flavors the society in which God has placed us in. And believe me, he knew the status and the circumstances of the society that he placed us in before we ever got here, and yet caused us to be salt and light in the midst of it.

Jesus wants us to become like children, not act like children, but instead to be dependent, to be yielding, and to be open to whatever he wants us to do.

I've always lived away from family. Always have. I've always had family that lived a long way away. My daddy was in the Air Force and he retired in the upper peninsula of Michigan.

[27 : 41] You can't get in Ohio and the United States before you hit Canada. When he retired, we moved to Greenville. New Orleans and my grandmother lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

And so on occasion, vacations were commonly to go up there and see her. When we lived in the UP, if we had a vacation, it was to come to South Carolina and see my other grandmother. We moved to South Carolina.

I grew up. God called me to go to New Orleans Seminary. I married a Mississippi girl. Okay? Pastored in Mississippi, traveled to South Carolina. to see my family.

Moved to South Carolina. Traveled to Mississippi to see family. Lived in Mississippi. Traveled to South Carolina to see family.

Now, hey, I left a daughter in Mississippi, so I think I'll probably be traveling to Mississippi. But when I was a child, I never questioned, where are we were going?

[28 : 49] I mean, I might have asked them, but it didn't really matter. I didn't really have a choice. When that 68 or that 76 Buick was full, it's time to get in the back.

No seat belt, back window down. I threw a G.I. Joe out the back window. Greatest sin I ever committed as a child was throwing a G.I. Joe out the back window. But we got him back, and he was a war veteran after that, you know?

So, I just got in the car and went where my parents were going.

It's time for Christians to just get in a place. Quit questioning everything that God stirs in our hearts to do.

Just go. Hey, I don't know where we're going in this life. I know where I'm going when I leave this life. I don't know what God's got in store for us tomorrow, but I know I'm biting at the bit to be exactly where he wants me to be today and tomorrow.

[30 : 01] Let's just go with God. Let's quit trying to figure it out and go with God. With every head bowed and every eye closed. Maybe you're here today and the reality is your sin has separated you from God and you've never surrendered your life to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

You never ask him to come into your life and to change you. There is no personal commitment to Christ. You don't have a relationship with Christ. You may have a relationship with the church. You may have a relationship with good godly people, but there's never been a time in your life when you've committed your life to follow Christ.

I want you to know that this time, we'll stand in just a moment and we'll sing, and this time is created for you to have that opportunity to respond to Christ. It's not the only time you can respond, but what a great time it is.

The spirit of God is leading you to do that. I encourage you to be obedient and follow his lead. Maybe you're here and you are a Christian, but the reality is you know that God is drawing you to be a part of this congregation.

We've been blessed in recent days. Many have come along the way because they've told me, I believe God is calling us to join in the journey with this body of believers and to follow his will.

[31 : 14] If God's leading you to do that, you come. We'll help you in that process. Maybe you're here and you have made a private decision for the Lord, but you've never made that public.

Jesus, by example and by teaching, shared with us that we make that public first by baptism. We'll be baptizing in a couple of weeks.

If you're here today and have accepted the Lord before but never been baptized since that time, I encourage you to come. Take advantage of that opportunity. Or maybe you're here and you are a Christian and you know that, but you know there's some childish things in your life.

Sometimes you buck in the back seat. You're not happy with exactly what's going on. And you don't exactly do what God wants you to do. Will today, will you surrender that to God?

Lord, I don't know what I'm to do and I don't know where we're going, but I want to get in on what you want to do and I want to follow your lead today. You can do that at these steps and make it a makeshift altar.

[32 : 22] You can do it where you are. I'll never ask you to do anything more or anything less than what God would have you to do, but please don't satisfy yourself with less because you'll never be satisfied.

Just obey God as he speaks to your heart and life. Lord Jesus, I love you. I thank you for the opportunity that you give us through Christ and I pray that you'll help us to respond in obedience today as you speak to our heart and life.

In Jesus' precious name, amen. Amen.