

Blessing the Children

Mark 10:13-16

Introduction

Pastor Michael Youssef recalls a time when his mother prayed over him

He was 15 and living a pretty rebellious lifestyle. She called him aside one day and warned him that his rebelliousness was going to destroy his life.

He remembers the encounter well

“Michael” she said – “you don’t listen to what I say!”

“I’m listening” – I said – waiting for her to stop talking so I could go out with my friends.

“No Michael” – she said – “You hear my words but you don’t listen!”

She was right – but I didn’t care. I felt no remorse because *I liked sin* and I had no intention of changing the way I lived my life.

My mother could see the defiance in my eyes – so in desperation she placed her hand on my head and began to pray: ‘Lord’ – she said – ‘I have always believed and prayed that Michael would be the one to serve You with all his heart. But if I’ve been wrong, if Michael is not going to serve you – then I pray you would take him now.’

Those words shocked me more than anything my mother could have ever said. She had risked her life to give birth to me – yet she was inviting God to slay me if I refused to serve Him. That was the first time I realized how deeply I hurt my mother with my disobedience. Did her prayer change my ways? No – I remained selfish and rebellious. But her prayer haunted me. I couldn’t grasp the contradiction: my mother loved me with all her heart – yet she would rather see me dead than living in disobedience to God.’

He did eventually become a Christian as time progressed – and became a pastor as well [The Barbarians are Here, p. 96]

Her prayers were answered

We come this morning to a moving scene where parents are bringing their children to Jesus – for Him to lay hands upon them and bless them

As Christian parents one of the most spirit led desires we can have is that our children be blessed by God

This morning we will take a look at ways in which we can **seek the blessing of God upon our children**

I. Bless My Child - vv. 13- 14

Parents are arriving – and bringing their children to Jesus – so that He can bless them – perhaps say a prayer over them / to lay His hands upon them and pronounce a blessing

Jewish parents commonly sought the blessing of a prominent Rabbi

*** That is a good desire – to seek God’s blessings upon our children

Parents [if they are wise] recognize that:

- 1) we live in a wicked world – and
- 2) the heart of the human race is bent towards sin – if our children do not come to eventually embrace the Christian faith – they are subject to all kinds of wickedness / misery / folly – with eternal consequences

There is a battle on for the souls of our children

As Christian parents – we should never just assume that everything will turn out fine – if we don’t engage in the battle – seek God’s blessing upon our children

In September, 2016 – an after school program [geared towards kids] was launched called – ‘After School – Satan Clubs’. The first club began in November of 2016 at a Portland, OR elementary school. The program is sponsored by the Satanic Temple – which created the group to offset the presence of ‘Good News Clubs’ - - - In fact – their goal is to place an ‘After School Satan Club’ in each school where there is a Good News Club

Lucien Greaves – spokesperson for the Satanic Temple states: ‘We are only doing this because Good News Clubs have created a need for this . . . our point is that if you let one religion into the public schools you have to let others, otherwise it’s an establishment of religion.’

Such clubs are now active in several of the major school districts across our country

That simply reminds us of the world we live in – the battle that is being waged

Spurgeon: ‘I heard of a man who said that he did not like to prejudice his boy, so he would not say anything to him about religion. The devil, however, was quite willing to prejudice the lad, so very early in life he learned to swear, although his father had a foolish and wicked objection to teaching him to pray. If ever you feel it incumbent upon you not to prejudice a piece of ground by sowing good seed in it, you may rest assured that the weeds will not imitate your impartiality. Where the plow does not go and the seed is not sown, the weeds are sure to multiply. And if children are left untrained, all sorts of evil will spring up in their hearts and lives.’

If we do not sow truth – the weeds of wickedness are sure to follow

Just as Satan once led Adam and Eve into sin – He still is in the business of promoting wickedness and rebellion against God – he has not changed!

Christian parents – knowing the dangers in this world want to steer their children towards the safety of embracing Christ as Lord and Savior – choosing the ways of the Lord – rather than the paths of the wicked

We recognize that forces are arrayed against us and our children – the stakes are high in this battle

Since seeking the blessing of Jesus is a good thing

How do we do this?

***** How do we seek the blessing of Jesus upon our children?**

- We seek the blessing of Jesus upon our children by praying for them:

By lifting them up before the throne and asking God to bless them with faith and repentance / asking God to give them a hunger and thirst for righteousness / asking God to open their eyes to the glories of the gospel / draw them to Himself / protect them from the evil one

We tend to pray about what we care about

If you could look back at a ledger of your prayer requests over the last week / last month – you would see a reflection of what has occupied your thoughts / your cares / concerns

Have you prayed for your kids this last week?

If you want God's blessing on their lives – you pray for that [you bring them to Jesus for blessing / just like these parents]

Knock on the doors of heaven – Lord bless my child / protect them from the evil one / the dangers and follies of sin

Matt. 7:7 – ‘Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; Knock and it shall be opened.’

Charles Spurgeon shares that his mother was once praying with he and his brother – and one particular prayer stuck with him:

“Then came a mother's prayer, and some of the words of that prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey. I remember, on one occasion, her praying thus: “Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ.” That thought of a mother's bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience, and stirred my heart.

Pray for your children

What do I pray?

Joe Stowell used to pray with his son before bed – ‘Dear God help Matthew grow up to be a man of God.’

One day his son said – ‘dad - can I pray?’

His son prayed – ‘Dear God – help me to grow up to be a man of God’

- **We seek the blessing of Jesus upon our children by teaching them and bringing them to places where they can be instructed in spiritual truth / the Word of God**

Timothy was instructed in the Scriptures from a young age

II Tim. 3:15 – ‘From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation thru faith which is in Christ Jesus.’

What a blessing to have parents who take you to church before you even know your ABC’s
Who read you the bible before you can read it yourself

Deut. 6:6-9

Why on the doorposts and gates?

They were to put the word where they would see it and be reminded of it [on a regular basis]
– and to talk about it

I once was puzzled by Sandy Gray – and all the different verses and teachings she likes to put up in the hallway of the Sunday School wing

Then I read this verse and I thought – that’s it – that is exactly what she is doing – putting God’s Word / truth where it can be seen as we pass thru the gates!

We bless our children by putting God’s Word in front of them

- **We seek the blessing of Jesus on our children by Being a godly role Model of the Christian Faith for them**

A role model is someone who can be imitated or followed as an example

Parents should strive to be able to say with Paul – ‘Be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ.’ [I Cor. 11:1]

Jon Nelson wrote a book on children who grow up in the church – but then end up leaving the faith when they go off to college

He gave this insight: ‘a gospel faith that is joyfully and seriously embraced, and lived out by loving and faithful parents, is much harder to ‘chuck’ than one that is perceived to be fake, inauthentic, and sporadic.’ [A Faith that Lasts, p. 73]

Authenticity in the faith – is a blessing for children to grow up under

There are atheists out there who grew up in pastor’s homes – why?

They will tell you – hypocrisy / phoniness

Bruce Wilkinson attended a conference where he found out he was sitting next to the son of a very famous Christian leader. [He didn’t say who]

He introduced himself and asked: ‘what was it like growing up in your father and mother’s home?’

‘The next thing I knew – the man turned, swore at me, swore at his father, swore about the bible and said: ‘I hate God / I hate Jesus Christ’ – then he turned and walked out of the conference

Obviously has anger issues

If we don’t role model an authentic faith for our kids - all our teaching – all our dropping them off at Sunday School / all our Christian instruction – just falls away

John Wooden - basketball coach at UCLA – had a number of rules for his players – but he always made it a point to model the behavior he wanted to see in his players

Wooden: ‘There is hypocrisy to the phrase, ‘Do as I say – not as I do’ – I refused to make demands on my boys that I was not willing to live out in my own life.’

One rule was against swearing

A former player Denny Crum: ‘I know a lot of coaches that are yellers and screamers and use foul language, even toward the officials. Coach Wooden never did any of that. If he got upset with a player – he would say, ‘goodness, gracious, sakes alive!’ Those were the strongest words one would ever hear from him.’ [The Greatest Coach Ever, p. 86]

If you teach your kids not to lie – do you lie?

If you teach them to forsake sin – do you forsake sin?

Here is a parent’s prayer: ‘Lord - help me not to do anything that would undermine my own testimony for Christ.’

These are just a few ways we can seek the blessing of Jesus upon our children

II. Childlike Faith - vv. 14-16

The people were bringing their children to Jesus to be blessed by Him

How old?

Mark uses Παιδια = young children [word used of the 12 year old daughter of Jairus – 5:39]

Luke uses Βρεφη = infants [Luke 18:15-17]

So – the passages together seem to indicate children of various ages

Some of these children may have been approaching Jesus on their own

Jesus says: ‘Let the children come’

The disciples – interrupt this [send them away] – basically saying, ‘Jesus doesn’t have time for this!’

They didn’t think this was worth Jesus’ time – these are just children – they aren’t important / they have no status in society

He’s too important to mess with children

If it had been a king or a ruler that wanted time with Jesus – they would have been very accommodating – but mere children – Jesus is far too important

Jesus rebukes the disciples – He does have time for children

The disciples are implying that children can’t enter the kingdom until they become like men

Jesus says: ‘It’s the other way around – you can’t enter the kingdom until you become like children.’

Some like to find a support for infant baptism here – but there is no water here and Jesus didn’t baptize anyone – [John 4:1, 2]

They are just being brought to be blessed

What does v. 15 mean? [child-like faith]

We are called in the Scriptures to be child-like in our faith

“Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child shall not enter it at all.”

This does not mean that we better become a Christian before we are twelve or it won't happen!

We enter the kingdom with child-like qualities / as a child

What is it about children that we need in approaching God?

1) Humility 2) Trust 3) Dependence

Humility

Matt. 18:2-4

What keeps people out of the kingdom? [pride / rebellion against God – refusal to look to Him]

Pride: 'I don't need saving / I don't need Jesus to die for me' / I'm a pretty good person

Humility says: 'thank you Jesus for dying for me'

Trust

'How does a child enter the kingdom of heaven? - - - He believes what the Word of God says in the testimony about Jesus

A child doesn't say: 'How could Jesus rise from the dead?'

A child doesn't say: 'How could Moses part the Red Sea?'

It takes an adult to do that

Children are teachable and receive the Word with a great trust – lacking the skepticism of the adult

Dependence

Children [especially the very young] are dependent upon others for their very survival [food / clothing / shelter] – they contribute nothing and are fine with that!

We have nothing to offer by way of works or merit for our salvation

In the spiritual realm – you and I are as dependent upon God for salvation as an infant is upon its parents for its survival

In the physical realm – children grow up and leave home [become independent] – that is normal

Something wrong – when a 40 year old man still lives with mom and dad!

'Where's my breakfast - Mom?'

In the spiritual realm – it is the opposite in our relationship to God our heavenly Father – we never lose our dependence upon God

We always need His grace – His mercy – His shelter - care – His guidance and provision

We gladly embrace that as His children

Conclusion

In February 2015 – 20 Egyptian Christian men were beheaded on a Libyan beach by Isis.

The men – had traveled from Egypt to Libya in search of work – and were swept up in an Isis raid. But – there was one other figure among them captured by the Isis militants. He was an African from the country of Chad – Matthew Ayairga – who had himself migrated to Libya to find work. He was not a Christian at the time – but for some reason was captured along with the others.

Since he had been captured with the others – he was asked along with them the same question: ‘Do you reject the Christian’s God? / Do you reject Christ?’

Having observed the faith and composure of the other Egyptian Christian men – Ayairga made a profession right there – He calmly confessed: ‘Their God is my God.’

Like the Moabite Ruth – who once said the same thing about Naomi – ‘let your people be my people / let your God be my God.’

That’s our goal as parents – that our children – by God’s grace might say – ‘Their God is my God’

The *God* who so loved the world He gave His only Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life