

Rev. Seth D. Bode †† Sermon 415, 02-28-2021 †† Lent 2

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

ISAIAH 40

⁹Get up on a high mountain, O Zion, you herald of good news. Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, you herald of good news. Lift it up! Do not be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” ¹⁰Look, God the LORD will come with strength, and His arm is ruling for Him. Look, His reward is with Him. The result of His work is in front of Him. ¹¹Like a shepherd He will care for His flock. With His arm He will gather the lambs. He will lift them up on His lap. He will gently lead the nursing mothers.



There is no age limit on truth. Happy things can be true for children as well as elderly. We celebrate 1-year-old birthdays as we celebrate 81-year-olds. The truth is one orbit around the sun amounts to a year, young or old. Hardships and suffering can happen to children. Children need to look both ways and hold mommy’s hand across the road because the truth is automobiles can hurt them as they can hurt mommy. There is no age limit on sin. Children sin, adults sin. Yet there is no age limit on faith; from infancy Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures and was able to make him wise for salvation through FAITH in Christ Jesus.

When Jesus preached and taught among the people, He literally “lifted” a child up “on His lap,” as our text says. He had a moment to set a child before His disciples and explain humility.

We should address children with the proper title. Luther said, “When you see a child on his father’s lap, you should take off your hat and say, ‘*Herr Doktor*, we should be ashamed of ourselves before you.’ We must become as little children, because a child does not have in his heart the malice of a prince or noble.” A child hears prayer and believes. A child thinks about clouds and candy in heaven. Children leave the big things to bigwigs and ride on a hobbyhorse. Peace of mind is easy. Luther continued, “If we were to become children, then the pope and I (and all men) would be of one heart and mind.”

Today Isaiah offers no age limit as he proclaims,

Let The Truth Of Jesus Christ Be Told

1. The task to lead children to Jesus

Man was created for a double purpose. He was intended 1) to reign over the earth, and 2) to live for God and to live with God forever. Both his reign of the earth and his immortality we lost by sin. Now it costs us loads of labor and pain to make a living on earth. In order to escape and not remain in eternal death, man must ****be taught**** that plan that God devised for the saving of sinners.

The prophet Isaiah predicted not only an end to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, but also a restoration. He had not only the punishment for the people, but the answer for their sorrow.

How can a Christian preschool answer the double purpose that God created for man? It certainly has to be a school for both living in this world and how to be saved. A school that teaches one without the other is deficient. Luther said, “Some teach nothing from the Scriptures; others teach the children nothing but the Scriptures, both of which are not to be tolerated.” If a Christian preschool is the answer to the double purpose for God’s creation of man, both must be taught in the school—earthly knowledge and the knowledge for salvation.

A Christian preschool needs to teach what is right and wrong before God and people, and to instruct children in the way of salvation, that God has prepared for us sinners in Jesus Christ. We hope that these children grow up not only to become virtuous men and women who walk in the way of right, and shun the paths of sin and vice; but also to walk in the fear of God and the true Christian faith, who know where their souls will go when they die, not to forfeit their souls (Mark 9:36).

That is what the prophet commands when he says (v9), “*Get up on a high mountain, O Zion, you herald of good news. Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, you herald of good news. Lift it up! Do not be afraid!*” Who is Zion and Jerusalem that herald good news (in other words, bring glad tidings)? It is the Church of the New Testament—the Church of Jesus Christ—and the glad tidings it brings is the tidings that the angels proclaimed on the fields of Bethlehem; the tidings that the boy Jesus grew in knowledge and wisdom; the

tidings that Jesus was pierced for our transgressions and was crushed for our iniquities; the tidings that Jesus took up His life anew and gives His life to me and you. What is it that Zion is supposed to say to the cities of Judah? *“Here is your God!”*

It would be nice if we had a mountain to climb every day and shout the good news. We do not have a mountain, we have pews, a microphone, and our livestream. We do not have a mountain; we have a preschool.

This good news is the most sacred part of our preschool. This is to be the labor of a Christian preschool by day and the prayer of the Christian preschool by night. This is the highest and chief objective. Any Christian preschool worth its confession wants to play a role in fulfilling what Isaiah prophesies about the Chief Shepherd (v11), *“With his arm he will gather the lambs. He will lift them up on his lap.”*

What would it profit Zion if we could convey earthly knowledge, but we would not lead them to Jesus? What could we answer, when at the last day the Lord would ask, “Where are the souls of the community entrusted to your care?” What use would it be if we answered, “Our preschool was a financially viable business and helped children make it into Kindergarten and thrive.” I would never want the Lord to answer, “You balanced the books, but held back the Bread of Life. If you labored only for the world, then you must share the fate of the world.” *Look, His reward is with Him. The result of His work is in front of Him* (v10).

Those entrusted with a preschool must aim to lay the lambs of Zion into the arms of Zion’s Shepherd.

2. The privilege to lead children to Jesus

Why not perform this task boldly? *“Get up on a high mountain ... Lift up your voice with strength ... Lift it up! Do not be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”* On a high cliff, the waves and winds roar and rage beneath, but the Church carries out God’s will in the fear of God, not the fear of men. We spread the message unashamed of the gospel, for it is the *“power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”* (Rom. 1:16). Love us or hate us, let us do what is right without flinching or wavering.

Leading children to Jesus is a work that Satan hates. He employs all his tools to prevent it. Satan hates no one more than he hates a teacher of “God’s Word in its truth and purity.” Not only Satan but the whole kingdom of darkness is against our little Bethlehem and its work. We have our own sinful flesh to contend with, because the Old Adam never wants to work for Jesus. We have the depraved influences of our society manifesting even in educational TV shows and books, working hard on their growing hearts. We have religion without knowledge, and fanatics who praise it and push it on us. We don’t always see the fruits of our labors, and the discouraging thought frequently arises whether it is all worth it.

But we cannot forget that it is God who hires His laborers in the vineyard, and He frequently chooses those whom the world wouldn’t choose. Not all of God’s laborers have the same kind of work and the same kind of success, but it is the Lord who chooses both His sowers and His reapers, and He makes every one of them sufficient to accomplish what He sent them to do (v10), *“Look, God the LORD will come with strength, and His arm is ruling for Him.”*

There is no more blessed work under the sun than to lead children to Jesus. It is a privilege above all privileges. In Matthew 18:6, Jesus says, *“But, if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [‘offends,’ ‘scandalizes’], it would be better for him to have a huge millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”* Now if it is such a dreadful sin to let children depart from Jesus ... what a great and glorious work to draw them to Him! Surely this is a work worthy of labor and self-denial. People will go to great lengths and labor, day and night; endure hardships; sail on stormy seas; and risk their lives to gain wealth and great fame—things that quickly pass away—but the souls who hear the gospel cannot be chewed up with moth and rust. They will stand with Him at God’s right hand.

There is no expiration date on truth. The children of our preschool will grow up and will move on to other education and grow old. But the truth cannot be taken from them. They have the seed of faith sown, and there are 5, 10, 18-year-old memories of Little Town of Bethlehem in the community even now. These children are not really ours or even their parents’. They are a trust from the Lord. The Lord loves our children more than their parents. The Lord has simply given us the privilege of sharing the truth. Let the truth of Jesus Christ be told. Amen.