

It is Not the Will of Your Father That Any Perish

Matthew 18:10-14,

Easter Sunday II April 19, 2015

Sermon Text, Matthew 18:10-14 (KJV):

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”

Beloved of the Lord..... The greatest heartache of any Christian parent, is when one of their children departs from Christ and falls from grace, becoming an unbeliever. I know many parents who have spoken of this pain, both mother and fathers, and I know also their tears and prayers. This spiritual heartache is best expressed in the word of David who lost his own son to both wickedness and death Absalom. “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Today’s lesson regarding Jesus and the Lost Sheep is good, because we see how precious every soul is to Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, “For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.” As long as our fallen son or daughter, mother or father, brother or sister lives, it is the earnest desire of the Good Shepherd to seek and find them, and bring them back into the Holy Christian Church. But how is this done, and what can we say to such a loved one who has fallen? Here I can give no better advice than to keep praying and don’t give up witnessing to them God’s Word with love, “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword.” When a loved one lives in unbelief, they need to hear both Law and Gospel, sin and grace. Regarding the Law, they need to hear what God says about their sins and God’s wrath against all men for sin. They (and we) are not good in God’s sight because of these sins we commit with our bodies and minds. God Himself says in Romans three, “There is NONE righteous, NO NOT ONE: There is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. *They are all gone out of the way*, they are together become unprofitable; *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*.....Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” If they are to be led to repentance, they must stop with the excuses and understand one day God is going to judge them and all men for sin. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” This is God’s holy Word, and pity the soul who calls God a liar “for our God is a consuming fire.”

God did not give us the Ten Commandments so we can be puffed up and proud about our works, but the Bible says “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” When we study God’s commandments we ourselves should feel the guilt of our sins as Paul says “that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God.” Moreover, while we dare not absolve the impenitent sinner with forgiveness as long as they do not repent, we must also by our words hold Christ before their eyes as their only Savior from sin. Fallen Christians have heard the Gospel before so they know this, but just as we work by the Word to convince someone of sin, so we work by the Word to convince someone Jesus is the only way to heaven. Unbelief alone damns.

Today then let us keep the Gospel at the center of our understanding and in the center of our own lives, and thanks be to God!.....for “even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

I. What does it mean to despise a little child? Jesus now begins by saying “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones”. To despise a child means to look down upon them as if they are of lower value or a lesser being. It is a grave sin to injure or hurt the faith of a child because the soul of a child is just as precious in God’s sight, as the soul of an adult. We were all once children after all, and we were all born into the world as infants, the offspring of a man and woman by God’s design. In our society however, just like the elderly are considered a burden, children are generally despised because they must be clothed and fed and taken care of. The greedy and covetous heart of man doesn’t want to spend money on children and nobody ever really gets rich by having children. Moreover because children are so innocent and helpless, there have been perverse men who molest and abuse them. God will judge such

on the Last Day, except they repent. But let no adult think they can take advantage of a child or treat them in any kind of abusive way, for Almighty God above sees every deed done to a child, and He hears every word spoken.

Therefore, “ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” I am old enough to know the faith of a child is tied closely to the words and deeds of a father who should always be a good example. Many a son has been injured by the words or deeds or poor example of their own father who fails to examine his own sins. Fathers are not just to feed and clothe the family or defend them, but we are also to teach and lead our children to Jesus and the love of every word Jesus has spoken. Pity the child who never sees their father reading the Bible. Fathers are also to diligently teach their children God’s commandments, and we must also discipline within reason. Let no parent swallow the devil’s bait by thinking it’s wrong to spank a child. Such a parent will be spanked by God Himself. Our Lord says in Proverbs 13:24 “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Many of the men in prison today are there because their father didn’t love them enough to discipline.

But Luther said one should punish children in such a way that the apple lies beside the rod. “Children that can be forced to obey only with rods and blows will not develop into a good sort; they will at best remain godly no longer than the rod lies on their back. But under Christian training godliness is rooted in their hearts so that they fear God more than they do rods and clubs” (What Luther Says, #419, Ewald Plass). When they are older and leave the home, if the love of Jesus has filled their hearts, they will seek to live a life to the glory of God, knowing the certainty of their salvation. Thus let us be sure to teach our children the Gospel and forgiveness, for just as we adults rejoice that through Jesus our sins are forgiven, so our children will rejoice and find strength in the same.

“For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.” Notice the double emphasis on heaven. Every baptized child can thus be sure God above “in heaven” has angels constantly watching over them “that the wicked Foe may have no power over us.” Again Luther said we should thus say to our children, “Dear child, thou hast thine own angel; when thou prayest in the morning and in the evening, that angel will be with thee, will sit by thy bed, has on a white garment, will nurse thee, will rock and protect thee that the Evil One, the devil, cannot come to thee. Also when thou cheerfully sayest the benediction and grace at the table, thy angel will be with thee at the table, serve thee, protect and watch that no evil strike thee.” Indeed if we would teach our children in such a way, they would not be afraid when they are alone, but they would rejoice in the mighty protection of their Father.

II. Jesus came to save all men and all children. It is interesting now, that after Jesus tells us how God’s angels watch over our children constantly, even while they in love behold the Father’s face, Jesus declares “For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.” In this way Jesus makes adults and children equal in God’s sight, for all mankind was lost by way of sin, yet the lost are the very people the Son of Man came to save! Children are no exception to the word “lost” in that we were all born in sin, original sin, which “is the total corruption of our whole human nature.” Yet whether we are fathers or mothers, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, the very purpose of Jesus coming in flesh and blood, was to save and deliver us lost sheep from our own sinful wandering. When we are convicted of our guilt as fathers or mothers, when we stop making excuses as to the sinful behavior of our children, when we confess our sins even against our own children, our comfort is in this: that the blood of Christ washes us clean, blots out our sins, and Christ Himself in the Gospel dresses us in robes of white saying, “Now ye are clean [every whit] through the Word I have spoken unto you.” Now “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.” Note especially those words “return unto Me, for I have redeemed me”. This means we should repent and turn and go back to Jesus, for though we have strayed, this Good Shepherd will surely receive and welcome us back.

III. Parable of the Lost Sheep. In order (now) to impress upon His disciples how every soul is precious to Jesus, and how earnestly Jesus wants ALL MEN TO BE SAVED, Jesus taught His disciples the parable of the lost sheep. What can we learn from this parable? First we learn every lost soul is precious to Jesus, especially the children, for Christ places great emphasis on children in this lesson. But just as we are not to look down upon children as of lesser value in God’s sight, so let us not look down upon Muslims, Jews, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Atheists, adulterers, homosexuals, etc., as if they are a lower class of people on account of their sins. Christians also are perverse by nature, and we have bowed down to idols also for it is written “there is none righteous, no not one.” If you think God is going to take you to heaven because you have never committed adultery or bowed down to Allah like other people, you are wrong and the very thoughts of your mind are sinful and evil in themselves. You are not justified in God’s sight by your works

but you are DEAD in trespasses and sins, as is also your pastor. Were it not for Jesus who kept God's commandments for us, in our stead and place, and were it not for our Good Shepherd who sought us out and called us by the Gospel, we ourselves would be Jews or Muslims, homosexuals or adulterers, living in the blindness of unbelief as First Corinthians 6:11 says, for "*such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*"

Therefore in this parable of the Lost sheep, understand how dearly Jesus wants to rescue also your brother or sister, mother or father, son or daughter that even now is living in sin and unbelief without repentance. So wherever God's Word is taught and preached and witnessed, both Law and Gospel, there is Jesus the Good Shepherd diligently seeking, searching for, and finding such Lost Sheep, and there is INDEED "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And "if so be that He find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray." How wonderful to know God experiences joy whenever one Lost Sheep returns to the fold! Jesus Himself is happy and glad!

What a contrast this is then, His joy over the one sinner that repents, as opposed to the pain you have in your heart right now because a member of your family, or a close friend does not believe. Jesus knows this pain also, for just as the Son of Man can experience joy over the salvation of one, so the Son of Man experiences grief over the unbelief of so many. Remember that time in the Bible when Jesus approached the city of Jerusalem? Luke 19 says, "And when Jesus was come near, *he beheld the city, and wept over it*, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." So we learn here regarding your unbelieving father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, Jesus sheds tears over them too, and it grieves the very heart of God, for this is the very and same heart of God which was more than willing to give up His life for all sinners upon the cross, and now preaches peace and forgiveness to sinners in the Gospel. Even so "it is NOT the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Finally beloved, keep up the good work in praying for the repentance of your loved ones and don't give up! Though you have spoken the Word before, speak the Word again. Keep knocking on the closed door of their heart by teaching Jesus and the one thing needful. For Jesus said in Revelation three, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." May God grant this "ear to hear" to all our loved ones. Amen.

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