



The Parable of The Children in the Marketplace

(Matthew 11:16-19)

For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children.

Okay, let us have a look at this. Jesus had good things to say about children. He said, "Let the children come to me for such is the Kingdom of God, unless you enter as a child, unless you think and reason like a child, you shall not enter the Kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:14) Yet here, He is using the ways of children as a rebuke. Why?

Well, let me tell you what childlike faith is. Childlike faith is a simple readiness to trust, to believe something as being the truth without questioning or suspicion. Most children have no experience of being deceived or having their trust abused. However, as a child becomes an adult, he realizes that not everyone can be trusted: that there are people who would hurt them and abuse their trust. Because of life's experiences, adults can have a jaded and cynical view of the world

and they may take much convincing to believe in things, especially if it requires faith. Jesus wants us to have the simple faith of a young child. He doesn't want us to be cynical or suspicious, but instead to have an innocent view towards God and His promises.

Another thing - a child is normally totally dependent on his parents. A child whose parents do not provide for him will starve. Most children are reliant upon their parents providing them with food, shelter and clothing. Essentially, if left by themselves children would be in serious trouble and sadly many are in this unfortunate predicament.

To have childlike faith, also includes being totally dependent on God and to let Him rule in our life. It's true, when an adult comes to God in humility, he becomes childlike.

In this parable, "childlike" is really meaning "childish"—a child who wants their own way: a rebellious, stubborn sort of child. Children are very good at getting their own way! They can be all happy and nice when it comes to wanting to receive a treat. But, if the treat does not eventuate, they can throw a tantrum on the floor. This is the sort of child that Jesus is talking about.

"We played a flute for you,

And you did not dance." (v. 17a)

If you truly tried to please someone, it shouldn't matter if they danced or not. If you wanted to play a flute for Jesus, you should be happy that He would listen. He need not dance!

"We mourned to you and you did not lament." (v. 17b)

To expect others to mourn for you is selfish and immature. Scripture says: "When I was a child, I did childish things but now that I am a man, I have put away these childish things." (I Corinthians 13: 11) It is like Jesus was saying to the Pharisees or even to some of the leaders and people in this generation: "Stop being immature, grow up!

John has come in the spirit of Elijah. He doesn't drink because God called him to take a Nazirite vow not to drink! Because of this, you

say he has a demon. I come along and I am not a Nazirite and yes, I drink with my friends. Because I do this, you call Me a drunk! No, I don't fast all the time, so you call Me a glutton! You class me as some kind of pervert because I prefer to hang out with My tax collector friends other sinners. This, you would never do because you piously consider it to be offensive and undignified for it may scar your precious reputation. You have far too high an opinion, about yourselves!"

Jesus may be known as a gentle, meek and mild person, but He is also the sort of person I respect. I like someone who does not speak about me to other people in a derogatory manner, knowing full well it will get back to me through other people. I would rather that a person who has a problem with me, to come and lay their cards on the table, face to face, rather than go behind my back. I do not like confrontation, but I enjoy hearing someone's opinion of me. Even if it does initially hurt, I would rather hear it face to face.

Earlier, Jesus had been talking about John the Baptist and this is what led Him to this passage. He was first describing John and then He was talking about the leaders and also this current generation. John was said to be greater than all the other Old Testament prophets. Yet, Jesus said that even the least in His kingdom was greater than John. What does He mean by that? I believe that we are greater because we have the testimony of our conversion experience. John never had a testimony like us. John had the Holy Spirit already in him at his birth. Therefore, he had never been separated from God like we had before our conversion: before we repented of our sin and received Jesus into our heart.

Today, people reject Jesus for various reasons. One main reason why people reject Him is that they maintain that Jesus had an ego problem! Actually, they renounce the fact that He is the only way to the Father. Jesus said in John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." These words upset people!

But if Jesus was not the only way to the Father, He would not have had to die on the cross. Jesus pleaded with His Father, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be

done.” (Matthew 26: 39-42) By the silence that followed, Jesus knew His Father was in fact saying “No Son, there is no other way! You have to die.” Jesus submitted to His Father’s will because it was the only way that man could be saved from their sin problem and receive life eternal. Love conquers fear!

Eternal life is: knowing Jesus! (John 17:3) Those who invite Him into their life have eternal life living inside them because Jesus is that life. We enter into eternity at salvation, not at death!

The Pharisees had a problem with Jesus because He was not interested in keeping their rigid laws. More often, it was not so much the laws of Moses that Jesus was disobeying, it was all the added laws that the Pharisees had made up in their wrongful interpretation of the Law. Jesus fulfilled the Law because He only ever operated in the “spirit of the law.” The spirit behind the law was concerned with having the right attitude and motives for observing the law. We can even do the “right thing” and yet be absolutely “wrong in the spirit” of why we are doing it. There is a huge difference and people do not readily understand it.

“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7b. This verse totally sums up what I am trying to point out here. The prophet Elijah had said that before the coming of the Messiah (This word means the “anointed One”) God would rise up a special messenger among the Jewish people, who would prepare the people’s heart to welcome the Savior. Four hundred years later, John the Baptist did this preparation work. He was not Elijah himself, but John operated in the “spirit” of Elijah.

Jesus operated out of love and mercy and this compelled Him to heal even on the Sabbath when it was forbidden by law to do any work. God is love and full of compassion – wholeness is more important to Him than the legalistic observance of law.

The Pharisees were agitated that Jesus healed sinners and chose to spend time with them. They reasoned among themselves that if He was so righteous why didn’t He choose them to be his closest friends? They were totally blind to their own pride and hypocrisy.

There was a law that said: you were declared unclean if you touched a leper. Compassion in Jesus over-rode this rule as he touched the leper and made him well. What some people would consider breaking the Law, Jesus considered as showing love. Love trumps everything.

Jesus, the night before his death met with His disciples and spoke of a New Covenant for us to live under, but in reality He Himself had always been operating in this New Covenant of grace towards others at the expense of the Law.

This parable of the children in the marketplace is really a warning to people who are stubborn against Jesus and rebel at His teaching. It is also a warning to all of us that we should not be little children demanding things from Jesus. We should not be sitting down giving Him commands and then getting stubborn and upset because He didn't jump to our commands or answer our prayers in the way we wanted.

Some Christians pray stupid prayers, just like children at times ask for stupid things. While God is a generous God, He will only give us things that are good for us. Some people fluctuate between not feeling loved by God and silently despising God. The Pharisees were different - they despised Jesus all the time!

Yet, God has not cast off the Jews: they still remain His covenant people and therefore hold a very special place in His heart. He had first selected them to be His chosen people and promised to always be their God. God is faithful to His Word. God will never go back on any promise He has made. The Bible says that the whole world came into existence through the spoken word of God and it is held together by the power of His spoken word. I seriously believe that if God were ever to break a promise, any promise He has made, the whole world would disintegrate! It would no longer be held together!

Today, people can be suspicious of the way to salvation, wondering why it should be so easy to be forgiven all of their sins just by accepting Jesus into their lives. But bear in mind – it wasn't easy for God to see Jesus hanging on the cross! Nor was it easy for Jesus to

die in our place with the weight of every sickness, disease, deformity, every sin ever committed or ever yet to be committed by the whole of mankind – all bearing down on Him so that for the first time ever, His Father could not even look at Him and turned His face from Him. No wonder Jesus called out in anguish “My God, why have you forsaken Me?” Don’t ever call God’s grace easy! It is wonderful for us but it cost God everything!

Others think the Christian life is too hard and too restrictive – that it’s only made up of silly out of date rules. People don’t want to give up the things that they love doing. This is like a fisherman eating the bait instead of catching the fish. Unbelievers do not know how exciting God is and they settle for mediocrity.

The Pharisees believed John had a demon because he seemed “too way out”. They said he was possessed. At another time they said that Jesus was filled with Beelzebub. (The devil) They rejected Him because He was hanging around with the wrong crowd! They hated His popularity, His works and His teaching and saw Him as a threat to their livelihood and success.

The best way to imitate Jesus is to befriend hurting people and to show compassion to them. If Jesus physically showed up in our town where would He first go? Would He go to the pubs, the brothels and the homeless on the streets at night? Or would he first go to church where His brothers and sister gathered? It’s right that we fellowship at church regularly and worship as a collective body of believers but not at the expense of overlooking people who desperately need Jesus. We have God’s grace to draw on and the Holy Spirit to guide us, so we can minister in the overflow of what we have.

This is about all I have to say about this parable. It is a warning to us not to be like little stubborn, sad, rebellious children. Instead, have childlike faith and don’t hold grudges. God is a good Father and Jesus wants us to respond to the love of His Dad. Be like a child who trusts their own daddy to care for them.