

15th Sunday after Pentecost, 14th Sunday after Trinity – 2023

Saturday, 9/9 at 4:00 | Sunday, 9/10 at 9:00



Text: Matthew 18:1-20 NAS 1995

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: This sermon includes two critical topics: ➔ Our need to be *like young children* and ➔ how to deal with *believers who are unrepentant*.

1. **Young Children:** *Let us learn from them!*

- a. Believe like them: ¹ **At that time** [right after Peter listened to Jesus, caught a fish, found the coin, and paid the tax] **the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”** [They were probably thinking of themselves, not of children!] ² **And [Jesus] called a child to Himself and set him before them,** ³ **and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted [turned, changed] and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”** // Two things:
 - i. Be converted, turned, changed: It’s not work we do, *but what the HS does to us when we are open to God’s work in our lives.*
 - ii. Believe like young children: Not questioning, doubting, demanding proof – like many adults, *but simply believing that all of God’s word is true.*

- b. Be humble like them: ⁴ **“Whoever then humbles [*lowers*] himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”** // Young children are not arrogant – *trusting in themselves*, but humble – *trusting in God*.
- c. Receive them: ⁵ **“And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;”** // To receive a person with childlike faith is to receive Jesus! We receive him by faith, *because of what Jesus has told us*, not because he seems important.
- d. Three warnings: *Immature believers are vulnerable!*
- i. Do not tempt them: ⁶ **“but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble [*fall into sin*], it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea [*rather than cause them to sin*].”** ⁷ **Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!”** // We live in a world with much temptation *but let us NEVER do the tempting*. To do so is SO SERIOUS *that it would be BETTER if each of us drowned with a heavy millstone around our necks!*
- ii. Avoid being tempted: ⁸ **“If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble [*to fall into sin*], cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.”** ⁹ **If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into**

the fiery hell.” // Jesus was not speaking literally, but *RADICALLY* to get our attention. Eternal fire is real, so be radical to avoid eternal punishment!

iii. **Do not think little of them:** ¹⁰ **“See that you do not despise [look down on, think little of] one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.** ¹¹ *For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. [probably added]” // Saved ones are precious in God’ sight; He has given holy angels to minister to them [Hebrews 1:14], so may they also be precious in our sight.*

e. **Value them:** ¹² **“What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? ¹³ If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. ¹⁴ So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.” // Every single little one is valuable to God, so He gave His Son to the agony of the cross to purchase everyone for Himself. As God greatly loves, let us do the same!**

2. **A Fallen Christian Brother/Sister:** *How to love them!*

a. **Call him (her) to repent:** ¹⁵ **“If your brother sins, [1] go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen to you, [2] take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, [3] tell it to the church; and if he refuses to**

listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” // First, take three steps to convince of sin and call to repent. If unsuccessful: Second, inform the person that he is ✦in unbelief, ✦separated from God, and ✦headed for eternal pun.

b. Withholding and extending forgiveness:

- i. The keys: ¹⁸ “**Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.**” // “Binding” is informing an **unrepentant** person that heaven is locked. “Loosing” is informing a **repentant** person that heaven is unlocked.
- ii. Agreement: ¹⁹ “**Again I say to you, that if two of you [who believe in Me and My words] agree on earth about anything that they may ask [regarding binding and loosing], it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.** ²⁰ **For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.**” // Jesus was speaking of the special way in which He is present with those who ✦trust in Him and ✦agree based on God’s word.

Let Us Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, grant us to always possess the faith of young children – *simply believing all of God’s word*; then, keep us ✦humble, ✦free from sin, and ✦active in calling all who have fallen into sin to repent.

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