

St Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI  
Pastor Mark Gartner  
Sermon for Pentecost 20 – October 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012

### **Mark 10:13-16 (NIV-2011)**

**People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.**

Dear Children of God,

St. Luke's is a big church. I am not just talking about the size of the building, I am talking about the number of people that call St. Luke's their church home. At the end of 2012, our records indicated that there are 1450 people who call St. Luke's their spiritual home. Of that number 281 or almost 20% of those are children are 8<sup>th</sup> Grade and younger. If we added the High School age people that number would jump to almost 400 young people in our church 18 years old and younger (which is almost 30% of all our members). That is a lot of people. That is 400 souls that need to be nurtured, and fed by God's Word and Sacraments. That is nearly 400 souls who need someone to bring them to Jesus so that he can bless them through the powerful Gospel message that can and will work in the hearts of children.

This thought about the young people of God gets us to think about the bigger picture. I want us to think about this question: What about the children? If every child is born into this world spiritually dead and on their way to hell, then someone truly must not only intervene in their life with the Gospel, someone must also be the model to show them how to live as the children of God. Someone must help them in their battle with Satan until they become old enough to know how to win this war with the resources that God has provided.

Why does St. Luke's Lutheran Church have a Lutheran Elementary School, Sunday School, Confirmation Classes and Teen Bible Classes for our children? Why does St. Luke's do everything that it can to assist parents in helping their children know and follow Jesus Christ? The answer is found for this same reason. We know that there is a life beyond this one. As a result, when death occurs or when Christ returns every person will spend eternity either in heaven or hell. This means that the most important people we must help is our children so that they can grow up knowing Jesus Christ and knowing how to live as His servant in a sick and sinful world

Today we want to refresh within our minds and hearts on why we need to go out of way to help our children and our parents to know Jesus Christ. And it is here where Jesus Christ Himself teaches us a very important lesson in what this really means. It is to allow Jesus to touch and bless every child by His love so that He can lead them through this world all the way to heaven. Let us examine these words and see how the Lord reminds us:

### **Sermon Theme: Bring All Children to Jesus!**

- 1. So Jesus can bless them in this world**
- 2. So Jesus can bless them in the world to come**

**“People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”** The story before us is one that all of us can visualize. Jesus was teaching the people about what it meant to be a part of his kingdom. And of course, crowds always gathered to hear him because he taught with authority and

he taught with the powerful love and wisdom of God. But, while Jesus was teaching the people, parents kept bringing their children to Jesus to touch them. Maybe one or two people would have been tolerable. But, they kept coming and bringing more and more children. And finally the disciples started telling the people, no more. Don't bother the master anymore with your children. He is too busy teaching.

It is one of the few times the Bible records an emotion for the Son of God. This is similar to the Bible story where Jesus came to the grave of His good friend Lazarus and he wept. Here Jesus was not sad, he is indignant. This great indignation caused Jesus to stop teaching the people to rebuke his own disciples. What made Jesus upset was that these children needed him and they were a perfect example of what it meant to be one of his children or one of his disciples. If we can understand why Jesus was upset, then we can see the need for teaching the Gospel to our children and for modeling this great power to our children.

At first glance, we might say, "How could the disciples be so clueless?" Why in the world would they keep the children away from Jesus? But I think that Jesus might be quite frustrated and angry with many of us as parents and members of St. Luke's. Are we any better than the disciples when we fail to bring our children to church on a regular basis, because we have "better things" to do on Thursday evenings or Sunday morning? Are we any better than the disciples when we fail to make use of the many tools that St. Luke's offers to assist families in the training and instruction of the Lord such as Sunday School, the Day School, our Lutheran High Schools or Teen Bible Class? Are we any better than the disciples when our lives fail to model the love of Jesus for our most important people in our lives - -our children and our families? Any time that we do anything that might hinder our children from coming and hearing the saving message of Jesus or hindering them in their faith life makes us just like the disciples who hindered the children from coming to Jesus.

But why is it so important to bring our children to Jesus? The first point has to be that every child needs to be blessed by Jesus because of the sin that is in their hearts that separates them from Jesus. It is the same sin that we have, and it is the same sin that condemns them to eternal destruction. God reminds us about this sin that is even found in children through the Psalm writer David in **Psalm 51: 5** "**Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.**" If every child is a sinner from birth, then we all need God to intervene so that he can make this child become his child. God gave us the sacrament of Baptism as a way to allow Jesus to touch their hearts and souls and bring them into his kingdom as his child. But people always want to ask: Why do young children need to know Jesus Christ? It is simple. As a sinner, they will grow up in the guilt and sadness that comes from carrying the burden of their sin with them. This burden of sin causes rebellion and a desire to commit more sins and live with more guilt and if this is allowed to continue the children will cause them to grow as someone who does not know what God's love is all about. Children also need to have faith in Jesus because only those who believe will have eternal life. This is a matter of life and death. This is a battle for the immortal souls of our children.

Children need also to have an example of what it means to be a child of God living in a world of sin. Children like to imitate. When I was a little, I liked to imitate certain sport athletes -- the way they batted the baseball or shot the basketball. You see the same thing today as young people imitate athletes or famous people. But how many of us would say that our children imitate us? Who has the most influence on your children? If you say other people, then we have a problem. Parents need to have the greatest influence on their children's lives. Children are looking to their parents to see the example that they are setting. Parents, do your children see you pray at home or read your Bible or even attend Bible Classes? Do your children see you in church and that the church service is the highlight of the week because it recharges your spiritual batteries with hope and peace? Or do they see you attend church out of habit and then see a different person at home than the one they see in church? This is why Jesus commands us to bring our children to him so that he can bless them. Don't just preach about how important it is to hear God's Word -- model it. Rather than just preaching to them about going to Sunday School, Teen Bible Class or Catechism -- model it as you also attend Bible Classes. Bible Classes is not just for the little kids, it is for all of God's children.

Jesus also makes another point that is important. He simply says that the best way to know him is like a child. "**Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never**

**enter it.”** A young child lives in the land of all these large people all around them. They must believe a very basic truth. Mom and Dad love me. In the same way Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so. There is no question as to how this works because their mind cannot grasp the how. All that they need to know is that Jesus loves them and has saved them. It is this child-like faith that produces wonderful trust and this wonderful trust produces a great peace and hope that will get them through any trouble. This peace and hope is their strength that then gives them the joy to look around them and see this peace and hope and love displayed in so many ways. The children become our example in this way because Jesus wants all of us to have a child-like faith.

The reason for this child-like faith is simple. There is more to life than the here and now. There is more to life than just the things we can see. There is a spirit world all around us in which real angels watch over us. There is a spirit world all around us in which evil angels try to tempt us and lead us away from God. And it is this spirit world that will one day join in a place called heaven. In other words there is more to life than the one in which we presently live. There is a better place a perfect place of peace and hope. And we will be here not because of anything that we could ever do. We will be here because **“God so loved the world that everyone who believes in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life.” (John 3: 16).**

Because we are born into this world sinful and spiritually dead, God created a sacrament to bring children to faith so that they could believe in him and be saved by him. This is why God gives us a promise **“Train a child in way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Prov. 22: 6)** God knows that children need Him and the love that only he can give them. This is why he commands all parents to teach their children about him. God wants every child to know him through their parents. Parents, you are going to not only be the messenger of the Gospel you will be the example of it.

Here again we see a reason why we have a Lutheran Elementary School, Sunday School, Confirmation Classes and Teen Bible Classes for our children. Isn't it great that here we can have teachers who are going to reinforce the example that parents are setting at home. Here we have teachers not only teaching about the Gospel, they are modeling it also. Our teachers are your extension to your children so that while they are learning their subjects that are hearing the Gospel and modeling its importance to them so that they can realize how important it is in their own lives as they grow. Because once again, there is more to life than the here and now; we are preparing them for the wonderful life that awaits them in heaven.

In the meantime we have to prepare them for the world that they will face. Jesus reminds us in John 8: 31,32, **“If you hold to my teachings you are my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”** Our world is so filled with the lies of Satan that it will be easy for us to go along with these lies unless we know the truth of the Bible. And, once we know the truth the lies become easy to see. Parents, how much of God's truth do you know? Do your children see you consulting the truth of the Bible to know what God wants of your? Do you live by this truth or do you live with the lies of the world? If you want your children to know the truth they must be in the Bible.

Here at St. Luke's we provide so many opportunities for the children to learn this truth and we provide so many opportunities for the adults to know the truth to help them. This is why we exist as a congregation. This is why the words of our text are so wonderful. Jesus wants us to bring the children to him so that he can help them, bless them, and save them. May we listen to these words of Jesus and make sure that all of our children know Jesus Christ and how much he loves them so that they will grow up into the next generation of his disciples and carry his word to their children and to all of the people of their generation. When we do this not only will our children be with us in heaven, but countless others will be able to know Jesus through our children. May all people know this Savior who loves them so that all will be with us in heaven. Amen