

## Words for an Emerging Church

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

# Dealing with Some Serious “Kid Stuff”

*These commandments I give you are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. —Deuteronomy 6:6-9*

*I love to tell the story, for some have never heard,  
the message of salvation, from God's own Holy Word.*

— “I Love to Tell the Story,” Katherine Hankey

As the world casually observes us hosting a Vacation Bible School, it sees a lot of “kid stuff.” The average person thinks of this week as a time to entertain children with games and moralistic stories full of “happy ever afters” which are nice for children to hear. How sad it is to know that the world is so blind. As we engage in this crucial work of telling the Good News to young people, we are taking part in evangelism and discipleship at its finest. True, we do want to make it child-friendly as this is our primary audience, but what we are doing is a far cry from frivolous kid stuff! In fact, I am hard pressed to think of a more important work that we do as Christ's Church. And though the lessons may seem very simple and harmless, beware, for they are telling the Truth with a wisdom and power direct from God.

At Vacation Bible School we celebrate deep and powerful truths which demand to be heard. The world looks on and only notices cute and harmless children's stories. If only they would pause and pay attention! The Bible's telling of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, Abrahams' call, Joseph's betrayal and redemption, Moses, Samson, David and Goliath, on through to the adventures of Paul and the early Church are no mere amusements. Each one of these accounts tells of God's grace and righteousness, of human rebellion, and of the glorious and gracious plan for our salvation through Jesus Christ. If I were to be restricted in my preaching for the rest of my days to only preach the “children's stories” of the Bible I would have no difficulty expressing the fullness of God's love and plan for us. In fact, as adults we too often brush these stories aside as if we have already studied them enough.

This is the Good News which young people need to hear, and though we may appear to be watering down the message as we preach it in child-friendly ways, do not be deceived! Luther once remarked that the Bible is deep enough to baffle the wise and

scholarly, yet the Bible can also be grasped by any child. A little one can come to understand the full plan of salvation just as well as any adult. I am reminded of a college friend who told me of her asking Jesus to be the Lord of her life when she was just four years old. She has since spent her life doing campus evangelism. Her understanding of the Gospel has deepened since that tender age, but the heart of this Good News has been there in its fullness all those years! These are also Bible teachings which stay with a child for life. The Church youth leader once reported to me that my son Ned handily won the Bible trivia contest in youth group, and I knew the reason for his victory. I wish I could say that he had been regularly reading his Bible all his young years, but the real reason was that he simply remembered the hundreds of Bible stories which we had read to him as a young child. These truths are not forgotten, and the messages of love we tell now may endure with these children for the next eighty years!

Another joyful component of Vacation Bible School is the older folks hearing these precious stories yet again and considering more deeply their truths. While our primary audience is the children, it is such a joy to witness the young leaders and helpers, and the older adults as they engage the Bible stories that are being taught. They have heard these stories before, but each hearing challenges them to think a little more deeply.

As VBS season is now upon us I pray that all be involved. If you have been unable to physically assist in the effort, do what you can to spread the word and extend invitations (and mid-week is not too late!). Pray for our staff and for the many little ones God sends our way. Whatever you do, be sure not to brush this week off as mere kid's stuff. Remember, Jesus did not take too kindly to the little ones being pushed aside!

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

*Almighty God and heavenly Father, we thank thee for the children which thou hast given us: give us also grace to train them in thy faith, fear and love; that as they advance in years they may grow in grace, and may hereafter be found in the number of thine elect children; through Jesus Christ our Lord.* —John Cosin, 1594 - 1672