

Coming as a Child for Children

Luke 2:1-7

December 21, 2025

Some of us are old enough to remember Art Linkletter and his Comedy show House Party. The most popular part of that program was “Kids Say the Darndest Things”. Any of you remember that? I must tell you that although he has passed on, I have some material for him. When reviewing the story of how God provided for the Israelites in the desert, I asked the preschoolers what God gave them to eat, to which one child said not, “Manna,” but “Mayonnaise!” They would have complained about that too. Another time we were reviewing Palm Sunday and I asked them what Jesus was riding. One boy said a camel, and before I could correct him, another little girl said, “I rode a cannibal at the fair!” You gotta watch those cannibals at the fair. Kids do say the darndest things.

We’re going to talk about children today so please open your Bibles to Luke 2. Pew Bible. Over the last couple weeks our excitement and anticipation have been building as we eagerly await the arrival of this Thursday, Christmas Day celebrating the birth of God’s Son, our Good Shepherd, our Suffering Servant, and most importantly, our Savior! The astounding thing is, that although the Son existed in eternity past with the Father and the Spirit, the Trinity decided the best way to deliver the world’s Savior was not to send Him in a spaceship as Ancient Aliens suggest, nor even share His message on an angelic podcast, nor arrive as an adult repairman for the human race. He didn’t lead a platoon of angels to storm earth’s beaches and retake this territory that Adam surrendered to the Devil. No, the way God chose to enter this world is the same way He chose for you and I to enter it, as a helpless little baby depending entirely on His parents for every need. What was God thinking? If you are able please stand as we read about this from Luke 2:1-7 KJV And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Say Baby. The Creator of the universe entered the world He created as a baby. Does that not blow your mind? This action, by its very nature elevates and affirms children! He became one! We **all** started out that way! I was a child once and believe it or not, you were too! Like their parents, children bear God’s image, but each does so

with its own unique features, characteristics, and even his or her own inborn preprogrammed personality, as every parent discovers.

How special are children, amen? I'm so very thankful Jesus helped us understand that because it was not always so. Many children in Jesus' day were slaves; servants working for their owners as soon as they were old enough to do so. Sadly, it's still that way in some countries, all of which have little or no Christian influence. In the Old Testament we read about Israel's neighbors sacrificing their infants in fire to Molech and even Israel got in on the action under some of its most wicked kings. Although no nation today openly condones this practice, it is still done by some tribes and cults not to mention the legality of abortion that is the ultimate disrespect of a child. Praise God He forgives even this, amen? But let's pray and work for the day when babies are valued and abortion is outlawed.

In other homes of Jesus' day as well as in our own, children were abused. Worth very little. Jesus' teachings largely revolutionized not only the value of women, but also that of children. Initially by coming as a child Himself, but also in His example and teachings. Let's look at some of them.

Luke 18:15-17 tells us that, "People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them." That's a good thing, right? "When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them." Can't you hear them, "The Master doesn't have time for your little baby. He's teaching adult lessons to adults about adult topics. Bring your baby back when he's an adult." Vs 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "**Let** the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." How awesome is this! Mark's gospel tells us Jesus was indignant! It's one of the few times we find Him that way and it was because they were trying to keep kids away from Him! Some still try to keep children away from Jesus.

Not only did He rebuke His disciples for excluding the children, He spoke two very important truths. Did you hear them? 1. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And 2. Anyone who would enter God's kingdom must do so like a little child. What did He mean? He meant that just as children are quick to trust and believe, so we should be quick to trust and believe Him. We sometimes think of children as dumb or stupid. A study cited in Creation Magazine, however, discovered that children intuitively believe in creation before being taught otherwise. They have to be reprogramed to believe all this just gradually happened over time with no God. They're not dumb. Stop trying to keep kids away from God! Every child is born with preloaded software including a capacity for God, a basic knowledge of right and wrong, the ability to love and be loved, all of which we should encourage. God wants us to trust Him not only on Creation but on all things as a child completely trusts his or her parents. Little children can teach us that!

Children are often more insightful than their parents. Luke 10:21 says, "At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." God takes pleasure in revealing truth to little children! They aren't to teach our Sunday School or preach our sermons, but we should pay attention to what they say because they sometimes understand spiritual insights we don't. At age 12, Jesus was conferring with the teachers in the temple. Now adulthood arrived for Jewish boys at age 13, so at 12 he was still a boy. If they had said, "Children are to be seen and not heard," imagine what they would have not heard.

Children are also honest about many things, except sometimes their own behavior. If they're eating as guests and someone asked them how the food is, they're going to say yuck instead of saying it's delicious while trying to choke down another bite, like we do. God's Kingdom is a kingdom of honesty and truth. Little children can teach us that!

Two weeks ago we talked about how Jesus came to serve and one of the times when the disciples asked He who was the greatest, He called a child and told them they had to humble themselves and become like little children just to enter His kingdom! In that passage He again elevated the value of children by saying that if anyone welcomed a little child in His name, he welcomed Jesus Himself! We talk about caring for the least of these in Matthew 25, the poor, the persecuted, the naked. When you help one of them, you help Jesus. But here is another example. When you welcome a child, you welcome Jesus! How vitally important it is for us to welcome children! As individuals and as a church. I'm so thankful for the children God has entrusted to Antioch and I'm thankful you have welcomed them in many ways! BLAST, youth groups, Sunday School, Preschool, VBS, creation camp, nursery, children's Church, toddlers, etc. I've never seen so many children in a congregation this size. But I would remind us, to whom much is given, much is required. God has entrusted us with the most valuable resource there is! The next generation! May we be faithful in sharing Jesus with them both in our words and in our actions. Children are not just the church of tomorrow they are part of the church today. They can pray! They can believe! They can hear God. And they can respond to Him! Most people get saved as children!

And they can praise Him! Say praise. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Matt 21:15 tells us the **children** were shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," This, of course, upset the chief priests who asked Jesus in vs 16 "Do you hear what these children are saying?" "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of **children and infants** you have ordained praise'?" If you've ever watched a child worship, it is very moving!

Jesus also warned us about harming children and leading them in the wrong direction. In Matt 18:6 He said, “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Why did Jesus say that? Because He loves kids! Mark tells us that Jesus, 16 ...took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.” He hugged them! Jesus not only came as a child, He loved children! Some He healed, some He even raised from the dead. And I’ll bet if they had baseball, you would have found Him playing 2nd base. Jesus loves kids. God loves kids! And He expects us to do the same. A church’s and a nation’s values are often most obvious in the way they treat their children. They are not to be worshipped nor are they to rule the roost, as is sometimes the case, but they are to be cherished, nurtured and loved as the special gifts from God that they are!

So along with the great privilege of having all these children at Antioch comes the great responsibility. Not just to fill time with godless activities, but to give them Jesus! To teach them God’s Word! Every craft, every activity, every game should help them grow closer to God. We need to be intentional about this as parents and grandparents and in the church. The passage we read during our child dedication this morning reminds parents “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. **Impress** them on your children. (NKJV-You shall **teach them diligently** to 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.” **All the time! They must not miss this!**

John Wesley once said, “You should particularly endeavor to instruct your children early, plainly, frequently, patiently. Whenever a child begins to speak, you may be assured that reason has begun to work. From that time, lose no opportunity of speaking of the things of God.” Prov 22:6 tells us to “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The British preacher Charles Spurgeon adds, “and be sure to go that way yourself.” **Not** do as I say and not as I do. Writer James Baldwin observed, “Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.” They will copy us!

In his book *Cure For The Common Life*, Max Lucado says, “The phrase to train up comes from a root word that means to develop a thirst. Hebrew midwives would awaken the thirst of a newborn baby by dipping their finger in a bowl of crushed dates and placing it in the baby’s mouth.” To train up means to awaken thirst and parents should awaken the thirst for God in their child, for His Word, for His Kingdom. The thirst is already there, but the role of the adults in their lives is to awaken it, bring it out!

In Eph 6:4, Paul told fathers, “Do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” The same goes for mothers, grandparents, teachers, and all adults. In Col 3:21 Paul said, “... do not embitter your

children, or they will become discouraged.” Be careful not to exasperate or embitter your child. With no air of superiority or being disconnected. We’re not just raising kids, we’re raising future adults! What kind of man or woman do you want your child to marry? Are you raising **your** child like that?

And most importantly, love them. Say love them. Correct, train, guide, discipline, yes, but all these in love. Love has got to be our motivation. It’s got to be our default operating system. Our training, discipline, and care must all flow out of our love for them. Billy Graham advised, “Love your children—and let them know you love them. Children who experience love find it far easier to believe God loves them.” And pastor I know wrote this short verse: **Children Need...**(George Bowers)

Children need guidance, correction, and love,
Not our harsh words or a kick and a shove.
As they start to discover big beasts and small bugs,
They need our compassion and genuine hugs.
Each of them different with no two the same,
Cherish each one, no matter their name.
Point them to Jesus, love them in His place,
And show to them also His mercy and grace.
Praise God for our children, let’s help them to know,
How much God loves them each day as they grow!

Fran Stott, professor of child development, has said, “Children need more than food, shelter, and clothing ... Every child needs at least one person who’s crazy about them.” How much better to have a whole family that’s crazy about them? A whole church? God is already crazy about them!

Jesus’ role with children was prophesied for Him years before He born. Of course Isaiah said a **child** would be born to a virgin and unto us a **child** is given, but the very last verse in the Old Testament, Mal 4:6 written 400 years before Caesar’s census, tells us that the future Messiah, “... will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers;” And He did!

Christmas is coming. And Christmas is all about THE Child: Jesus. Not children. But Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior, who came to earth as a little child. As a baby. And after He was grown, He loved children, held them on His holy lap and blessed them. He told us to welcome them and that whenever we do, we welcome Him. And He told us to become like them that we might enter His Kingdom. Jesus was and is crazy about children. And the more we become like Him, the more childlike we will become and the more we will love children ourselves. Today, we are blessed to have another painting that reminds us of Jesus coming as a child to love children. Sister Wendy Boyd used her talent to help capture Jesus’ love for children that we too should copy and show not only at Christmas, but every single day. As we pray today, thank God for children

and if you've never come to Him as a humble little child, do that now so that you might enter His Kingdom.

