

What are we teaching children?

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[0 : 00] We're going to take our text this evening from the psalm that we actually sang at the beginning of the service, from Psalm 34. Just before we turn to Psalm 34, just to reflect on the passage that we read and then link it to our service this evening.

The passage that we read, the children of Israel had been blessed and received many blessings. Right back from when Abram received the blessing from God in Genesis chapter 12 and at verse 1, where Abram was told he would be blessed and in turn he would be a blessing to others. And we know that despite this, Israel continued to sin against God. Despite the continued blessing that God restored upon them, repeatedly they turned away from him.

And they were influenced by the sin of the other nations around about them. And as we read in 2 Kings there, to the very point where God cut them off.

[1 : 22] And they were taken captive. And it was interesting to read in verse 25 to 28, how the people then complained to the king of Assyria, that the god of the land had sent lions to kill them.

And they wanted to know what they had to do to worship the god of the land. And how the priest was sent back from exile to explain, but still the people turned away from God.

It's very much the case that we see in our own land today. We've been blessed to be a blessing. When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

When I travel around in Glasgow, there's a poster that I passed on a number of occasions. And the man in the picture, I later found out, it's probably a priest or an imam.

And he's bending over and giving something to a beggar in the picture. But in the middle of the picture, and as I drove past, it's nothing to do with the speed that I was going past at.

[2 : 46] I actually thought the poster said, blessed to be a blessing. And I thought that's really interesting. However, on one occasion, I got stopped at a set of traffic lights.

And the poster was there in front of me. And what I actually realised it said was, bless and be blessed. But it had been totally flipped. But it was a case of, do something good, and you'll receive something good in return.

And that's very much, sadly, the mantra of many people today. That they only receive good if they do good to others.

But what we have to remember is, that God blessed us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We were unworthy of God's love. But through Christ, we were given God's love.

Through the sacrifice for each and every one of us. We heard this morning from Mr. McRae. Ian McRae, as he spoke to us.

[3 : 52] About the journey that Jesus made from glory to Golgotha. For each and every one of us. And the sacrifice that he made in that journey.

And let us not lose sight of that. But just to focus. I'll give you the link between the verse in Psalms. And the verse in 2 Kings. So these nations feared the Lord. Yet these carved images. Also their children. And their children's children.

Have continued doing this. As their fathers did. Even to this day. The children were taught. By the fathers. And by their parents.

And sadly. They followed in their footsteps. As parents. As Christians. Within this congregation.

[4 : 51] Within this community. What are we teaching. Our children. That they will take with them. Into future generations. The psalmist says.

Come my children. Listen to me. I will teach you. The fear of the Lord. Whoever of you loves life. And desires to see many good days.

Keep your tongue from evil. And your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil. And do good. Seek peace. And pursue it.

C.H. Spurgeon. Writing. On these verses. Says of David. Says of David. Though a warrior. And a king. The psalmist.

Was not ashamed. To teach children. And he goes on. And he goes on. Teachers of youth. Belong to true peerage. The work is honourable.

[5 : 49] And the reward. Is glorious. I haven't gone through. I haven't gone through the full list. Of birthday honours. To see if there are any. That are in that.

As it says here. True peerage. Has anyone been recognised. For the work they do. In teaching children. In Sunday school. As it said here.

Teachers of youth. Belong to true peerage. Children. Are the most hopeful. To teach. Wise people. Who want to propagate.

Their principles. Must. Do this. With the young. We are to communicate. The faith. And fear of God. And implant. Principles.

And practice of obedience. As much as possible. In children. He goes on. This verse. Should be the message. Of every Sunday school teacher. And every parent.

[6 : 45] For it is not. Without instruction. In the art. Of teaching. We should be attracting. And winning youngsters. Inviting them to come. And not repelling them. With harsh terms.

Strong words. How can each one of us. Follow. The example. That is laid down there. Come my children. And listen to me.

I will teach you. The fear of the Lord. Is that how we want. The children of this community. Our own children. To understand. What God.

Has promised for them. That's what the psalmist. David wrote. What's our example. From Jesus.

The disciples. Were with Jesus. The children. Came to see him. The disciples. Tried to chase them away. But Jesus said to them.

[7 : 45] In Luke 18. In verse 16. Jesus called the children. To him and said. Let the 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.

My question is. Is our attitude to children. Like that of Jesus. Or do we stray into being. Like the disciples. Are we hindering children.

Coming to Jesus. What do I mean by that? Well. In the community. How are we living our lives?

Are we reaching out to the children? Or are we letting them go their own way? Saying it's somebody else's responsibility. Sadly.

[8 : 46] The challenges facing teachers. Who want to be able to. Share God's word. Is becoming more and more challenging. In our schools. It was really interesting.

When we were away in Romania. A number of. Christian young people. That we met. Out there. Who were all home schooled. My parents didn't put them.

To the state schools. They taught them at home. I'm certainly not advocating. Home schooling. I would have certainly found it. Very challenging. To be able to do it. But it's certainly interesting.

Seeing. In Romania there. That many Christian parents. Have decided. That they're not sending their children. To the state schools. But are teaching them. At home.

And meeting these children. It was quite interesting. To see their fervour. For Jesus. As they're taught. And their grasp. Of God's word.

[9 : 44] And certainly. When they were praying. It was quite. Something. To listen to them. While we couldn't understand. What they were saying. I compared it once before.

It was a bit like me. Sitting here. And listening to Alec. And listening to some of these. Young children. At 10. And 11 years of age. Crying out to God. In their own language.

How are we teaching. Our young ones. How are we hindering them. Is it in what we say. What we don't say to them.

To encourage them. Is it the way we sigh. When something goes wrong. Or we complain. Maybe not here at the time. In church. Or out in the community.

And are we putting off. People coming. We've commented before. As a congregation. We've reached the stage. Where we've got no kids. Coming. To our creche.

[10 : 42] Where are our young families. How do we reach out to them. There's almost a generation. Or two that have been lost. And how do we encourage them. To come back.

And hear God's word. Children. Listen to me. I will teach you. The fear of the Lord. Jesus gave us.

As an example. He wanted the children. To come to him. He called out. For them to come. The same as he calls out. To each and every one of us.

He said. As we read in Luke 16. Truly I tell you. Anyone who will not receive. The kingdom of God. Like a little child. Like a little child.

Will never enter it. You're sitting here. You're sitting here tonight. And you haven't given your life to Jesus. Why is that?

[11:39] Is it because you're too proud? You know too much? You aren't prepared. To stop. And realise.

That unless you come as a child. And lay aside. Your pride. Your knowledge. And actually accept. That there was one. Who came from heaven.

To die for you. While you weren't worthy of it. While none of us were worthy of it. Jesus said. Come. And that call.

Is still there. For each and every one of you. Tonight. Come unto me. All those that are weak. And burdened. And heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

Jesus participated. With the young children. What do I mean by that? He took them. And he sat them on his knee. Put his hand on them.

[12:39] He made sure that they were centre. Of everything. That was happening. And I know in this day and age. It's very difficult. With different rules. Regulations.

To act in the same way. As Jesus did there. But where we take our example. From Jesus is. That the children. Should be at the centre. Of everything. That we do. Within the congregation.

They are the future. Of the church. They are the ones. That one day will lead. And if we don't teach them. To walk. In God's way. There is certainly plenty.

That this world. Has to offer. That will take them away. And take them. To other places. The same as the children of Israel. Were taught by the fathers.

To worship false gods. What are we teaching. Our children. This day. Some might say. Well I don't have children. I've never had children.

[13:35] My children have grown up. And moved away. Somebody else's opportunity now. Well my answer to that is. We all have a duty to pray. David says it.

David says it. Repeatedly on a Sunday morning. When the children go out to Sunday school.

Remember. And pray for them. Not just on a Sunday. We should be praying for them.

Every day of the week. For they're here within the church. And been taught in the Sunday school.

There's an element of safety for them. But when they're out in the world. There's so much.

That can seek to sift them. And take them away. So let's pray. Pray for the young folk. Pray for them fervently. We can teach them.

Again you may say. Well. I don't have any children to teach. But the very way you live your life. The very way you walk. The very way you interact with them.

[14:35] You might think. Well. I've been away from kids for that long. That I don't know what to say to them. Things haven't changed. Say hello.

Reach out to them. Shake their hand. Ask them how they're getting on. The challenges that kids faced. 10, 15, 20, 30 years ago. Are still exactly the same today.

The burden of exams. The burden of friendship. All the challenges. That children have. They're looking for role models. What can we offer them?

So let's teach them. In the way that we walk. To live. A life. To fear God. Let's not forget.

We're not Christians here tonight. We need to be like children. We need to lay aside. All. Things that hinder us.

[15:37] I'm too old. I've gone too long. I've sinned too much. Nobody will ever forgive me. Well the fact is. Before you committed these sins.

Before you were even born. Christ died. Christ died. To take away your sin. Just come as a child. And accept freely. That Jesus died.

For you. You may be well up in years. Your children may have left home. You may have grandchildren now. You have an opportunity.

To come to Christ. And shape the lives of these young people. And shape them for God. Think in these things.

Each and every one of us. Has a responsibility. To lead. Children to Christ. There's so much out there. That would seek to take them away.

[16:40] Things that seem good at the time. That they start to occupy time. And draw children away. From following Christ. They give more time.

To the things of the world. Instead of coming to God. Don't get me wrong. I know there are challenges. In getting children to come to church. I know there are things.

That we don't think attract them. To come to church. But we have a responsibility. As a congregation. As teachers. As youth fellowship leaders.

And as members of this congregation. To pray. And work with the congregation. To encourage our young people. To stay the course.

And to follow Jesus. Children. Children. There's a responsibility. For each and every one of you.

[17:42] One of the first verses. That I was ever given. As a young boy growing up. Was Ecclesiastes 12.

Verse 1. Remember. Remember. Your creator. In the days of your youth. Before the days of trouble come. And the years approach.

When you will say. I find. No pleasure in them. It's a short verse. It's a verse. That each and every one of us. Could memorise.

And live by. Each and every day of our life. When we were away. In Romania. When I talk about. Memorising a verse. We were in the church.

On the Sunday. And the children. From the children's home. That was connected. To the camp. That we were doing the work for. All. Every single one of them.

[18:39] Came up to the church. From the front of the church. The seven year old. Right up to the 13 and 14 year old. Came up. Some of them quoted one verse.

Some of them quoted. Five or six verses. But the one that I remember. That was quoted. A young boy. That brought. A boy that.

His mother had left him. Nobody knew where his mother was. But the young boy. And his wife. That were working. In the children's home.

Were working with these children. And teaching them. According to God's word. And this young boy. He stood up at the front of the church. And I tried doing this. But I couldn't do it.

He recited. Psalm 15. Lord. Who may abide in your tabernacle. Who may dwell in your holy hill. He who walks uprightly.

[19:40] And walks. And works righteousness. And speaks the truth. In his heart. He who does not. Backbite with his tongue. Nor does evil. To his neighbour.

Nor does he take up. A reproach. Against his friend. In whose eyes. A vile person. Is despised. But he. Honours those. Who fear the Lord.

He who swears. To his own hurt. And does not change. He who does not. Put out. His money. At usury. Nor does he take. A bribe. Against the innocent.

He who does these things. Shall never. Be moved. What an amazing. Verse. Or verses. For a young boy.

Starting off in life. To be able to recite. And to be able to live by. Who can dwell. In the holy place.

[20:36] And then it gives us a list. And then it says. Who who does these things. Shall never be moved. We remember our creator. In the days of our youth.

Before the days of trouble come. And the years approach. When we say that we find no pleasure in them. That. Is what's important.

In life. The verse teaches us. That we should remember now. It's an instruction to us. And we can choose to accept that instruction.

Or we can choose. To walk away from it. An instruction for us to remember. Now. Our creator. Not in 30 years time.

When it's become so difficult. That we've built up. So much knowledge. That we think. That we think. We know things. We've committed more sin. We've walked further away from God.

[21:34] It teaches us. It teaches us. To remember our creator. Now. And the importance of that instruction. Is that.

Is that if we remember our creator now. He has promised. He will never leave us. He will never forsake us. He won't walk away. We may stray from him.

But he has promised. But he has promised. He will not be sifted. And taken from the palm of his hand. Remember now. The creator. In the days of your youth. Because in doing that.

There's a blessing. Not just for us. But for our families. And for all those. That we come into contact with. We read Psalm 15.

I could just as easily have read. Psalm 1. Blessed is the man. Who walks not. In the counsel of the ungodly. Or stands. In the path. Of sinners.

[22 : 34] Come my children. Listen to me. I will teach you. To fear the Lord. You might be sitting here tonight. And you're thinking back.

To when you were. You were told to come to church before. How you fought against it. How you sat there. And it was almost as if you sat. With your fingers. In your ears.

Not wanting to listen. To what the minister. Or the preacher. Had to say to you. My encouragement. To you tonight. Not because I am standing here.

But because we've got God's word. Before us. And we've sung together. How deep the Father's love for us. How vast. Beyond all measure.

That he should choose. A wretch like me. To make his treasure. That we've sung together.

[23 : 31] That when I survey. The wondrous cross. On which the Prince. Of glory died. He died. For each and every one of us. In here tonight.

No matter where we've been. No matter what we've done. He died. For each and every one of us. Why do we turn away from him?

Why are we going to ignore him? We're going to sing. Later on. As we close. And it comes back to the importance. Of giving our lives now to Christ.

To remembering our creator. In the days of our youth. When Satan tempts me to despair. And tells me of the guilt within. What do we do?

Upward. I look. And see him there. Who made an end. To all my sin. We will be tempted. We will be challenged.

[24 : 33] Satan will come to us. And he'll say. No you're not good enough. Think of the time you did this. You said that. But if we are walking with Christ. Each and every day.

He tells us. Look up. See me. I'm the one that put an end. To all your sin. Because the sinless saviour died.

My sinful soul is counted free. For God the Lord. For God the just. Is satisfied. To look on him. And pardon me.

Absolutely nothing that we've done. It's because Christ. Has done it for us. He's paid the price. And because he paid the price. We can walk.

With him. And we are pardoned. Because of him. He's paid the price. And he paid the price. This morning. In his children's address.

[25 : 33] Ian McRae. Gave us the example. Of throwing a stone. Into the pond. And seeing the ripples. That went out.

From that pond. From that stone. And touched. To the edge of the pond. It was a great illustration. If he had finished it there. But he didn't.

He took a second. Light piece of wood. And flicked it. Or threw it into the pond. Wondering whether it would cause. A ripple effect. And it did.

It was slow. But the ripples went out. And touched the edge. Of the pond. You don't need to jump. All in.

To make an effect. You just need to be there. And be prepared. To touch somebody's life. You might then walk away.

[26 : 31] And never know the impact. But if you don't. Make the contact. In the first place. You have no idea. Whether there will be any. A ripple. Going out from that one individual.

From that one touch. Whether it be a prayer. Or a word of encouragement. Asking somebody to come along with you. To a meeting. They might never. Come back again.

But they were there. The opportunity was given to them. And a seed may have been sown. In their life. But in years. The same. As that small bit. Getting thrown in.

A slow impact. Eventually reached. The side. My encouragement. To each and every one of you. Going back to the.

The verses that we read. In second kings. The warning that's given to us there. What are we teaching our children. For the generations to come. What legacy are we leaving.

[27 : 28] For God's work. Are we touching people. For Jesus. So that they can go on. And walk with him. And remember their creator. In the days of their youth.

That they can walk closely with him. And they know what it is to dwell. In the presence. Of the most high. Let us pray. Amen. Amen.

Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you. That we are indeed able. To come into your presence here. And we pray. Heavenly Father. From the youngest here. To the oldest. That each one of us.

Heavenly Father. Would indeed. Examine our life with you. And how we walk. And how we talk. If we aren't. Heavenly Father. Walking with you this night.

That before we even reach the door. Heavenly Father. That we would stop and think. Is this the last opportunity. I will have. To hear God's work. Heavenly Father.

[28 : 29] That I need you now. That I would not leave this place. Until I know you. As Lord and as Savior. And if we have given our lives. To you. Heavenly Father. May we again.

Examine our life. As to what we do. For you. How we live for you. How we witness for you. How we reach others for you. You have given us. That command.

Heavenly Father. That we must go into. All the world. And make disciples. Help us to take that step. That we would indeed. Be able. Heavenly Father. To go out.

And have that ripple effect. For you. That through touching one life. That many others. May be touched for you. That souls. May be one. That we may never. Ever know of it.

Until we meet in eternity. Guide us this night. In Jesus precious name. Amen. Amen.