

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Eighth Sunday after Trinity, July 29, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 628, 648, 629, 627, 630.

Lessons: Psalm 145, Ephesians 6:1-4, Mark 10:13-16.

Sermon Text: Colossians 3:20-21.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

It goes without saying that children are a special gift from the Lord, given by him as a blessing. We read in Psalm 127:3 ***"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."*** (KJV) As living beings entrusted to us, we have responsibilities that are designated by God. We are to provide for their earthly care but especially for their spiritual care, that they may receive God's eternal blessings and especially eternal life. And the Word of God provides that spiritual care. Today, let's be reminded again about

**WHAT THE WORD OF GOD HAS TO SAY ABOUT CHILDREN**

1. God's words for parents.
2. God's words for children.

Our children certainly do not receive any instruction in the Word of God in their public schools. If there is anything taught there as values, you can be sure that they are values that someone else wants your children to learn, and may not be the kind of Christian values you want them to learn.

Where do children learn Christian values? Well, in your homes. Here at church. Here at Sunday School. But most importantly, they learn these things at home.

First of all the home was to be the place for teaching children. When God gave the commandments to Moses, he emphasized that his chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, were to teach their children God's ways. Listen to Deuteronomy 6:6-12: ***"These commandments that I give you today 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."***

God repeatedly commands and encourages his people to teach their children His ways, as in Deuteronomy 32:45-47: ***"When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, 'Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.'"***

God's words are words of life! You are to teach them to your children when sitting at home, when traveling, and whenever they are doing things with their hands and hearts. They are to be in your children's heads! But should it be so surprising that God tells us to teach our children when they are young? There is no better time than childhood to learn. A child starts with a blank slate of knowledge and understanding. It has been estimated that 90% of language is learned by age 5. Think of everything else that our young children learn – sometimes things that are not so good. Think of how children pick up on the examples of adults and especially the bad examples of their parents and grandparents. A child is like a sponge – soaking up information. And they really seem to want to learn – until sometimes at some point they learn – perhaps from their peers – that it is not cool to learn, that it is not popular to want to learn.

Parents – especially fathers – have a remarkable influence on children. Whether it is a preference for Fords over Chevis or a dislike for a particular vegetable, children learn from parents. They especially learn of

the importance of going to church and hearing God's Word. They learn things first from parents. And not only the words you say, but also your deeds teach your children. Sometimes, truly, actions speak louder than words.

We come from a religious heritage that emphasizes "bring your children to church" rather than "take or send your children to church". Bring them and stay with them. We read in Proverbs 22:6: ***"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*** (King James Version) The responsibility of parents is to train a child in the way he should go. God will take care of the rest of that passage.

Do you really realize how important it is to bring little children to Jesus, as he himself told us in our Gospel lesson? It is a matter of life and death. It is a matter of eternal life and death. Jesus was emphatic in stating that even little children should be brought to him. He taught us that we are to ***"go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*** (Matthew 28:19-20)

Do you know how important it is to baptize and then teach everything Jesus commanded? It is a matter of life and death, for Jesus also said in Mark 16:16: ***"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** We are talking about eternal life or eternal damnation. You, and, I am sure most parents, don't want to let their children learn everything the hard way. We don't want to let them learn the hard way that they can get burned by fire, or run over by a motor vehicle by playing where they shouldn't be playing, or get hurt by the misuse of knives or firearms or other dangerous things. How much more important is the risk of eternal damnation in hell? Do you want your children to suffer in hell because you failed to do what God commands you to do? Of course not. That is why you take to heart the command of God in our sermon text ***"Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged."*** Perhaps you remember that better from the King James Version: ***"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."***

Perhaps you even remember the similar words from Ephesians 6:1-4: ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' – which is the first commandment with a promise – 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.' Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*** Just to impress this upon you, please hear also the King James Version: ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."***

Think of the times you have seen children out of control. That can be the result of sin itself in children. But it can also be the result of parents never having taught their children. And the responsibility falls especially upon fathers. Did you notice that both in Ephesians, our Epistle lesson, and Colossians, our sermon text, that fathers are singled out? How many times have you seen that children, despite the Christian upbringing their mothers have tried to give them, have done exactly what their unbelieving fathers do? If fathers don't pray, children tend to follow that example. If fathers don't attend church, children tend to follow that example. Children tend to follow the examples of parents in their use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. We could devote an entire sermon to the terrible situation in our nation which has grown out of society's unqualified toleration, acceptance and even encouragement of children born out of wedlock and the lack of a father's influence upon children.

The commandments that God provided to Moses ***"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 6:6-8)

Yes, you parents have great responsibilities. You are to teach your children God's will and God's ways, and you are to live the example you are teaching. Now we could surely have at least one complete sermon of the responsibilities of parents.

But in the time I've chosen today, I must divide my time between parents and children. I've been talking mostly to parents so far. But children, the Word of God speaks to you, too. In addition to telling you about Jesus

your Savior, who died to take your sins away, the Word of God, the Bible, has an awful lot to say to you about living your life.

Listen to the invitation from Psalm 34:11” ***“Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”***

So here are some words of the Bible especially for children: ***“Children, [Children! Are you listening especially hard right now?] “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”*** Paul writes to believers in Ephesus, another city, much the same thing, reminding us of the fourth commandment: ***“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ – which is the first commandment with a promise – ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’”*** Ephesians 6:1-3. That could be summed up in one word: obey. Do what they tell you to do.

God loves children. Jesus himself said ***“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.”*** God is concerned about children, about them learning his ways to inherit eternal life. Remember the song “Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so; Little ones to Him belong, They are weak, but he is strong.” Many hymns and songs remind you of what God has done for you and what you want to do for him.

You learn about Jesus, you learn about God because God wants you to. He tells your parents to bring you to hear Jesus’ words and to sing about Jesus. He tells your parents to teach you about God. God permitted Martin Luther to write a catechism so that parents “should teach [especially the commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and other important teachings of God’s Word] in the simplest way to those in [the] household.”

If people don’t learn something when they are children, it can be harder to learn. Jesus speaks of child-like faith, of trusting, of believing.

There is one short command in our sermon text that you are to do – even all of your life: ***“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”*** Ephesians 6:1. Obey. That means you are to do what they tell you to do. They are doing what they do in God’s place, because God doesn’t tell you everything every moment of every day. Of course, God tells you everything in the Bible, his Holy Word. But he has given you parents to teach you what He says. And so you are to do what your parents tell you. If you don’t, that is sin, and you know that sin is doing bad things, or saying bad things, or thinking bad things, and God hates sin. ***“Obey your parents in everything.”***

Now I also have to tell you one other thing the Bible says. If your parents ever tell you to do something which God says you should not do, you are to politely tell them that ***“We must obey God rather than men!”*** (Acts 5:29) That does not mean that you argue with them every time they tell you to do something. But your believing parents know that they should not tell you to do something that God says you should not do. You must be very sure that your parents tell you to do something that God tells you not to do. But we would all realize that it is extremely rare – it doesn’t happen very often – that Christian parents tell their children to do something contrary to God’s will.

So children, what God tells you today can be told in just one word: Obey. Obey your parents. Obey all those over you, for God has placed them over you.

Have we always done what God in his Word, the Bible, commands? No. As parents, we have been woefully lacking in teaching our children at home, in having a time for family devotions and bible reading and hymn singing. We have been woefully lacking in helping our children memorize the Word of God and Luther’s Small Catechism. We have been woefully lacking in asking them what they learned. For all these things we ask their forgiveness and especially God’s forgiveness. We know that God forgives sins, and that he piled our sins upon Jesus. Thank you God! Forgive our sins daily and lead us all into your Word daily. Let our actions and words and thoughts always center upon God-pleasing things. We ask all these things in Jesus’ name.

For Jesus said ***“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, 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, put his hands on them and blessed them.”***

Lord, help us parents and grown-ups to teach our children, to love and appreciate them, and to teach them the ways of eternal life. Lord, help our children to be obedient, doing all they can to make you happy. Amen.