

"Let the Little Children Laugh"
Psalm 90:14

11 September Anno Domini 1994

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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(There may be parts of this sermon that have been borrowed from others. I am not certain. MLM)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear children of the heavenly Father:

The holy writer says that for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; ... a time to weep, and a time to laugh ... a time to weep, and a time to laugh.

A time to laugh?

Well, let's see. That reminds me of a cold winter when a family cat was left outside during a freezing blizzard. There was no where for the cat to get protection from the minus 20 degree weather and the 30 mile per hour winds except the front porch. In the morning the dad went out to get the newspaper and found the cat nearly frozen to death. The poor animal was barely able to breathe and certainly not able to meow. Carefully the dad picked the cat up and brought it inside. He phoned the vet and asked what should be done to get this animal thawed out. The vet suggested one teaspoon of warm milk mixed with a lesser amount of gasoline and fed to the cat. When this was done, the cat raised up on all fours, hissed once, and began running in circles around the living room -- onto the couch, over to the chair, in front of the tv and onto the couch again. After four such circles, the cat suddenly stopped, coughed once, and fell over. Was it dead? ... No dear people, it just ran out of gas.

... a time to laugh and a time to weep.

Making headlines across the nation in the past and recently have been stories of children killing children. An eleven year old slayer, who had killed a fourteen year girl, was himself found murdered - the target of gang revenge by two brothers (aged 14 and 16). We could go into detail, but ought we not spare the children here? We gasp at such accounts, wondering if it is really possible. Did these children even have any sort of childhood at all? In other news, hospitals report that x-rays have revealed old breaks in young children whose tender bodies have healed from brutal attacks. While the physical wounds may heal, the ones that don't are the ones inflicted on heart and soul. Every year thousands of children less than ten years of age are robbed of their childhood as they must sit, some on booster chairs, in witness stands in order to testify against an adult who has abused them. Was there any time for these children to have a childhood? A time to weep.

... for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven: ... a time to weep, and a

time to laugh.

On this Rally Sunday which begins the new Sunday School year with Sunday School classes, confirmation classes, and adult Bible classes, and which emphasizes the need to nurture everyone in the Word of God (especially the children), the sermon text is Psalm 90:14. Our theme is ...

... Let the Little Children Laugh

"Satisfy us in the morning with Thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

These words, spoken by Moses and handed down to us, are a prayer concerning all of a person's life - from childhood to old age. When Moses petitioned the LORD to satisfy us in the morning, he was not speaking about the morning hours of a 24 hour day. Rather, he was asking God concerning the early years of life - the time of babbling babies, teedering toddlers, and little children. Satisfy us in the morning with Thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. The morning refers especially to early childhood years. LORD God, heavenly Father, with Your steadfast love, satisfy the children in their early years.

The steadfast love of the LORD is intended for the little children. Artists have pictured Jesus and the children of His day. He holds them, draws them near, plays with them, speaks with them, and loves them dearly. He knows their hurts and fears and thoughts, for while there were times when the little Lord Jesus was asleep on the hay, there were times He was awake and listening to the sounds around Him. He knew what it was to be chased by evil men, when as a toddler, He was forced to run for His life with His mommy and with Joseph, His foster father. In Egypt, He lived for his early childhood years as an alien in a land with another language. We can almost see Jesus dragging a hammer around and trying to figure out how to use a saw as He watched Joseph and copied the carpenter's actions.

We recall, in Jesus' grownup years, that parents were bringing children to Him (Jesus), that He might touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to Me, do not hinder them; for to such as these belongs the Kingdom of God."

It is no wonder, then, that Jesus wanted and wants these little ones to be brought to Him during the morning years of their lives and given His steadfast love. After all, when Jesus suffered, He endured such treatment for children of all ages. When He was crucified it was so babies and adults could be baptized into His death and have their sins washed away. When He rose again from the dead, it was for infants, children, youth, adults, as well as for the old ones. Do you children know that Jesus died for you? Do you know that the LORD loves you? It's all true, and it should make you so happy that you rejoice, and when children rejoice they giggle and laugh.

So let the little children laugh and be glad.

It is commonly thought that children are gifts to their parents. This morning, please let that thought be challenged and be turned around completely. In reality, a case could be made for maintaining that parents are gifts to their children. Little children are not given life and placed in our homes to serve

us and to take care of us. That may happen when they are older children, but not when they are little. We (father, mother, grandparents, friends, aunts, uncles, and congregational adults) exist for them - to protect them, love them, and, oh yes, to make them laugh.

What sort of a gift are you to these little ones? Consider a man walking down the street - little girl at one hand and little boy at another. The dad stares straight ahead; no smile, no joy, no emotion - only a stony, grim face. If either of the children cracks a smile or comments on what a beautiful day it is, or wants to stop and look at a bug crawling across the sidewalk, his hand grips tighter and the joy of life is squeezed out of the soul. Every day such a walk is taken. Soon, - look at them - soon the faces of the children reflect the same image as the dad - no smile, no joy, no emotion - only a stony, grim face.

Or, consider the professional man speaking in cool, indifferent tones to his daughter. His language is articulate, precise, intelligent, and devastating. Straight talk; no sentiment. The truth - his truth that he was imparting to her concerning her appearance, her friends, her interests, and herself, was piercing her soul and killing her. With the skill of a verbal surgeon, his scalpel slicing layer after layer in which her early years of joy have been removed. So, you will hear no giggles from this girl with pig-tails - no laughter from her.

Or one more, a voice belonging to an adult: "You brat! You never listen! I cook for you, I work for you, I bust my back and all I ask for in return is a little respect and cooperation. Do I get it? No! What do I get from you? Nothing. Oh, no you don't. Don't you go rolling your eyes at me." And, instead of a spontaneous giggle, from this child you hear a snicker which smacks of sarcasm and contempt.

And such parents, who, after a decade of not really caring, suddenly rise up and fight and take up the cause on their child's behalf against a teacher or a pastor, or against some judgment of the educational or legal systems. These parents appear like some sort of heroes, come riding in to save their kids from systems and people who have actually been trying to help them for these years of parental neglect.

We (father, mother, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, and congregational adults) exist for the children - to protect these neighbors, to love our neighbors, and to make them laugh. That means laughing with them. Do you recall our text? Satisfy us in the morning with Thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Moses prayed that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. That means when we get older and when we get old - that we too may become as little children and rejoice as they do.

Laugh and your children laugh with you. Laugh with them until a memory of pure delight and precious relationship is established with them. Find out what trips the laugh-trigger of each child. What is it that evokes a genuine giggle? Is it a story? A game? Acting silly at home? Talking about the old days? Telling a cat story? Certain family traditions? Whatever it is, do that thing and let the little children laugh, because the giggles which come so easily in childhood must last a lifetime. Or, as the psalmist prays, "Satisfy us in the morning with Thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Give your children laughter in the early years of their lives so that they know for sure that they are loved by you and greatly loved by the LORD. Such laughter, care, concern and attention will give

them the self-control, courage and discipline that they will need. Because, soon enough they will see angry faces and hear ridiculing words outside the home. Soon enough they will be accused of things they did not do. Soon enough they will suffer guilt at the hands of powerful people who can't accept their own guilt and who must dump it, therefore, on the weak.

Sorrows such as these shall certainly come to children as they grow up - but surely, parents, not through us! The children here in the sanctuary will most assuredly have to face many difficulties, but certainly, congregational members not through us!

In that day, a day long before they become teenagers, children must have been strengthened in the LORD and in the knowledge and strength so they can resist the criticisms and false doctrines of fools. Being strong in Christ and certain of salvation and eternal life and forgiveness begins in the morning, that is, in the experience of childhood.

So, you parents who have your children in Sunday School and here in the Divine Service are to be commended. You are godly gifts to your children. And you are encouraged to have them here every Sunday, nurturing them in the Word of God so that they may recall their Baptism and hear and know and believe and trust all their days, that they, like you are forgiven in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Satisfy us in the morning with Thy steadfast love, O LORD, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Amen.