



Don't Mess with the Children!

November 7, 2021

Holy Text: Matthew 18:1-6

A World Hostile to Children

This is a timely Text. We live in a world extremely hostile to children. Why? Because from the Garden of Eden, Satan has warred against the seed of the woman. Ultimately, this Seed is Christ (Gal 3:16), but Satan, and indeed all evil principalities and powers, hates home and children.

Therefore it is not a surprise that pagan cultures (cultures ruled by demons) desire to hurt, pervert and kill children. This is perhaps most pointedly illustrated in Scripture by the worship of the demon principality Molech by the Ammonites, and sadly, God's people as well. (1 Kings 11:1-8) Molech's worship included child sacrifice. God commanded such things should never be done!

Leviticus 18:21 (KJV) *And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.*

Jeremiah 32:33-35 (KJV) *And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. **34** But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. **35** And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

Our culture, although it says otherwise, hates children too. It increasingly desires to expose them to, and cause them to heartily embrace, all manner of ungodliness and perversity. Even our cultural day to day systems and structures—our manner of life—tends to cultivate loneliness and isolation, artificial relationships, skepticism and disbelief, unbiblical morality and ethics, and abominable sexuality cleverly cloaked in humanism and relativism. As a result, hopelessness and despair (note the millennial loneliness epidemic) have been, for the last few years, at all time highs. And yes, our nation sacrifices children bodily as well, with some 62 million abortions since 1973. Molech worship is alive and well.

What does the Bible say about children?

1. They are made in the image of God!

Genesis 1:26-28 (KJV) *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. **28** And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

2. They are alive at conception!

Psalms 139:13-16 (KJV) **13** For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. **15** My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. **16** Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Psalms 139:13-16 (NLT) You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. **14** Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. **15** You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. **16** You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

3. They are a heritage and a reward!

Psalms 127:3-5 (KJV) Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. **4** As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. **5** Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

4. They are the responsibility of parents!

2 Corinthians 12:14-15 (KJV) Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. **15** And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

5. They must be loved, disciplined, and disciplined!

Titus 2:4 (KJV) That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 (KJV) And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. **6** And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: **7** And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. **8** And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. **9** And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

Psalms 78:5-8 (KJV) For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: **6** That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: **7** That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: **8** And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

Proverbs 13:24 (KJV) He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 19:18 (KJV) *Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.*

Proverbs 22:6 (KJV) *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

Proverbs 29:17 (KJV) *Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*

6. They must honor their parents!

Exodus 20:12 (KJV) *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

Proverbs 1:8-9 (KJV) *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.*

Proverbs 30:17 (KJV) *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.*

7. They are a part of the People of God!

Nehemiah 12:43 (KJV) *Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.*

2 Chronicles 20:13 (KJV) *And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.*

Recall that Paul not only addressed the adults in his epistles, but the children too! (Eph 6:1; Col 3:20)

What the Text says concerning Children

Matthew 18:1 (KJV) *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

1. First, we find it amazing that in such a context, the disciples would decide to argue among themselves about which one of them would be greater. Mark says:

Mark 9:33-34 (KJV) *And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, **What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?** 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.*

2. Recall that our LORD had just recently:

- Warned them to discern the signs of the times (Matt 16:1-4)
- Encouraged them to remember His power (the five and seven loaves and their baskets, Matt 16:5-11)
- Warned them against the doctrine of the Pharisees (pride and hypocrisy, Matt 16:12)
- Confirmed Peter's revelation of His deity (Matt 16:13-17)

- Declared the building of His Church upon the rock and the giving apostolic authority (Matt 16:18-19)
 - Told them to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow Him, and be willing to lose their lives for His sake and the Gospel's (Matt 16:27)
 - Been transfigured before them! (Matt 17:1-9)
 - Warned them again of His coming trials and betrayal! (Matt 17:22-23)
3. Amazingly, despite all these things, the disciples disputed among themselves about which of the would be the greatest in the kingdom!
 4. We would do well to learn from their failure here:
 - They were chosen by Jesus; they were in the most exclusive club in the entire world!
 - They were literally in the day-to-day presence of the Son of God! They literally walked, talked, conversed with, and prayed with the Creator of the universe!
 - They had a front row seat for some of the most astounding things that ever occurred on the planet: our Lord's teachings and miracles!
 - Yet somehow they felt the need to distinguish themselves among themselves and vie for power!
 - Here is a main lesson: pride is an absolute killer! It is incredibly sneaky and incredibly pervasive in all mankind!
 5. Remember what we learned about pride?
 - From Andrew Murray: "And so pride, or the loss of this humility, is the root of every sin and evil. It was when the now fallen angels began to look upon themselves with self-complacency that they were led to disobedience, and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. Even so it was, when the serpent breathed the poison of his pride, the desire to be as God, into the hearts of our first parents, that they too fell from their high estate into all the wretchedness in which man is now sunk. In heaven and earth, pride, self-exaltation, is the gate and the birth, and the curse, of hell."
 - From Jonathan Edwards: "The first and worst cause of errors that abound in our day and age is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit to darken the mind and mislead the judgment. Pride is the main handle by which he has hold of Christian persons and the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces to clog and hinder a work of God. Spiritual pride is the main spring or at least the main support of all other errors. Until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to heal all other diseases."
 - **Proverbs 16:18 (KJV)** *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

Matthew 18:2 (KJV) *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,*

1. To make His coming point, Jesus called forth a little child, who must have been close by.
2. Please remember that Jesus loved children, and had no problem involving them in His ministry!

Matthew 19:13-15 (KJV) *Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.*

Matthew 18:3 (KJV) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

1. With this precious child in the midst for all to see, Jesus tells His prideful disciples that unless a person “turns” (from their sins) and becomes like a child, they will not enter the Kingdom!
2. MacDonald writes, “He was speaking of the kingdom in its inward reality; in order to be a genuine believer a man must abandon thoughts of personal greatness and take the lowly position of a little child. This begins when he acknowledges his sinfulness and unworthiness and receives Jesus Christ as his only hope. This attitude should continue throughout his Christian life.”
3. We generally understand conversion: repentance and belief in Jesus. We have limited understanding of the kind of innocent trust and faith, exuberance, zeal, and “bright-eyed” love such conversion should generate!
4. Repenting and believing in Jesus should not produce cynicism, entitlement, stubbornness, and lack of tenderness and joy.
5. Rather, like little children, we should be happy, pure-hearted, honest, undoubting, curious, attentive, and always ready to follow Jesus into kingdom adventures!

Matthew 18:4 (KJV) Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

1. Our LORD loves humble hearts! He loves brokenness and contriteness!
 - **Psalms 34:18 (KJV)** *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*
 - **Psalms 51:17 (KJV)** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*
 - **Isaiah 66:2 (KJV)** *For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*
2. Please note that a child is already humble. They know their frailty and smallness. Something about adulthood can cause one to lose this biblical sense of self. Also note that the child doesn't have to “develop” or “grow into” humility. He possesses it by virtue of his state! The child IS humble; adults “have to learn to” humble. The right-thinking Christian should BE humble as well!
3. Again, recall what we have learned about humility:
 - Again from Murray: “And so the life of the saved ones, of the saints, must needs bear this stamp of deliverance from sin, and full restoration to their original state; their whole relation to God and man marked by an all pervading humility. Without this there can be no true abiding in God's presence, or experience of His favor and the power of His Spirit; without this no abiding faith, or love or joy or strength. Humility is the only soil in which the graces root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure. Humility is not so much a grace or virtue along with others; it is the root of all, because it alone takes the right attitude before God, and allows Him as God to do all.”
 - The essence of the Christian life is humility, humility, humility.” -Zac Poonen

Matthew 18:5 (KJV) And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

1. I believe our LORD here refers to both literal and spiritual children. In other words, those little ones that are “received” (or welcomed), and those who have humbled themselves unto Him regardless of age.
2. Again, imagine the scene. He's teaching adults to become as little children. The child is still right there in their midst. Is it plausible to suggest that Christ doesn't mean the child and only the adult?
3. So there are two lessons being taught: 1) Receive the children and 2) Receive the spiritual children.
4. The Pulpit Commentary says, “Primarily, Jesus refers to children, pure and confiding as the one he had placed in the midst; but his words are applicable to all who have the childlike spirit and character, the graces which he specially loves and rewards. The expressions here and in the next verse must be understood to belong in some cases to the symbol, and in others to the symbolized.”
5. To do these things in His Name is to receive, or honor, Christ!

Matthew 18:6 (KJV) *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

1. “Shall offend” is *skandalizō* in Greek. It means, “to trap, to trip up, to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way.” (Strongs; Thayer’s)
2. **These words are a warning from the Creator of the Universe: “Don’t mess with my children!”**
3. Millstone here is two words in Greek: one that means large and the other describes the stone. A millstone setup was typically two stones, one for grinding and one for a large base. Even the grinding stone could be so large and heavy it could take several people or an animal to move and use it.
4. He said those who offend or cause His children to stumble would be better off drowned with huge, heavy rock around their necks! Again, we believe this refers to actual, physical children, AND those who humbled themselves through repentance and faith.
5. **Make no mistake beloved: Jesus Christ protects and avenges His own! Those who mistreat His children will answer for their sin. Drowning by millstone is BETTER than the judgment such people will eventually face!**



2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 (KJV) *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; 4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be*

*counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: **6** Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; **7** And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, **8** In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: **9** Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; **10** When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.*

Three applications of this Text:

1. **We must commit to child-like humility.** This is accomplished by first by repentance and faith, and then through joyful participation in the spiritual disciplines: prayer, study, service, worship, ordinance, fellowship, and discipline/accountability, etc.
2. **We must evaluate our value of children.** Do we see them as gifts from God? Have we allowed any ungodly cultural sensibilities to creep in? Are we raising and discipling them according to Scripture?
3. **We must not harm children.** Whether physical little ones or the redeemed of the LORD, we must be careful how we treat the the LORD's children. Christ is watching and has promised to recompense those who mistreat his little ones!

Remember our past D6/Eph 6 applications as well!

1. Obey the parental mandate set forth in Deuteronomy 6:1-12 and Ephesians 6:1-4.
2. Teach and Live the Word at Home each day.
3. Make family worship a priority.
4. Bring back the Catechism (a simple summary of doctrine) and use it daily.
5. Develop a Family Covenant and Vision. (See Chapter 31)
6. Reestablish the ministry of fathers. (Eph 6:4)
7. Reevaluate Government/Secular education as a viable choice.

Amen!