

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday - Read and reflect on Mark 10:13. People felt comfortable bringing their kids to Jesus. What does this say about the nature of Jesus? The word “touch” denotes a blessing. It could be that some parents were following the Jewish tradition of bringing their children to a rabbi when they turned one. However, “little children” can mean “children of all ages,” so it is more than likely that children just wanted to be in the presence of Jesus. Why?

Tuesday – Let’s continue with verse 13 today. Children started to gather around Jesus with smiles and laughter. The disciples were annoyed and rebuked them. Why do you think the disciples reacted this way? What does this say about the disciples? How do you think the children felt at this moment?

Wednesday – Read Mark 10:14. When Jesus saw the disciples’ behavior toward the children, he became “indignant.” In other words, Jesus was angry at what he felt was unfair treatment. It is interesting to note that every time Jesus becomes angry in the gospels it is over unfair treatment of people (people being cheated in the Temple, religious leaders preventing healing on the Sabbath, and children being hindered from coming to Jesus). Not only does Jesus get angry but he makes a bold statement. He orders the disciples to allow the children to come to him and then says that the Kingdom of God belongs to children like these. What do you think Jesus meant by this statement?

Thursday – Read Mark 10:15. This is a key verse in scripture so don’t miss it. As if his previous statement was not arresting enough, Jesus then tells the disciples that unless they “receive” the Kingdom of God like a little child they will never enter it. What do you think that means? How does a child usually receive a gift? What is it about the attitude of a child that Jesus believes is so important? Children don’t understand the concept of merit or achievement. They simply bring themselves and are dependent and receptive. They also eagerly act on what they have been given.

Friday – Read Mark 10:16. This verse depicts what is perhaps the most precious scene in all of the New Testament – Jesus taking children into his arms and blessing them. The children are open and receptive to the love of Jesus. When was the last time you received the blessings of God like a child? When was the last time you felt completely dependent upon God and receptive to his love and guidance?



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Pasadena Community Church

~ Living With No Regrets ~ Learn to Play Again

Sunday, September 4, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Mark 10: 13-16

This morning I continue my series, “Living With No Regrets.” In this series we are looking at 5 common regrets of the dying heard by Bronnie Ware. Ware was a care taker for the dying and she heard these five regrets over and over again by many of the people in her care. As I looked over this list, I realized that many who hear my voice each Sunday also have these regrets. Yet, I know that the power of our faith can help us rise above our regrets and live with joy and peace. This series will enable us to do that.

Last week we focused on a regret that Ware heard quite often: “I wish I would have had the courage to live a life true to myself instead of a life others expected of me.” I encouraged us to embrace God’s love and who He has created us to be by taking a closer look at The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

Today, we will be looking at another regret that Ware heard from both men and women: “I wish I didn’t work so hard.” Ware often found people who arrived at the end of their lives regretting that they allowed work to get in the way of what was most important to them. They grieved that they didn’t make enough time for family, friends, and the simple joys of life. As a pastor, I have heard this regret more often than I would like. I have never heard people on their death bed tell me that they wish they had spent more time at the office.

The irony of this regret is that the value of hard work has been hard wired into most of us. We believe hard work is the back bone of our country. It is how things get done and dreams are accomplished. Hard work, many of us believe, makes the world go round. I wouldn’t deny the

value of hard work, but there is a limit to it. Hard work is important only to a certain degree. Hard work is not the point of our existence. If we spend our lives just slaving away at something, we have missed why God created us.

C.S Lewis got to the bottom of what I am talking about today when he responded to an important question. A group of theologians and scholars once cornered the great Christian thinker and asked him, “What is the most important theological discovery you have ever made?” He smiled and responded, “I exist to enjoy God’s enjoyment of me.” Did you hear that? God enjoys you! God wants you to enjoy him, to enjoy life, to enjoy the world He has created, to enjoy the people He has put in your life.

Scripture backs up God’s call to enjoy life in 1st Timothy 6:17: “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, *who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*”

A long, long time ago a group of people in the church got together and thought it was important to put together a list of the most important beliefs of Christianity. They called it “Catechism.” But they soon discovered that the list was too long and difficult to memorize, so they came up with a “Short Catechism.” This was to be a summary of the key beliefs of our faith. Do you want to know how this shorter catechism begins?

“What is the chief end of humankind?
To glorify God and enjoy Him forever!”

I come across so many people who won’t allow God into their lives because they think God

is going to make them give up fun. Many misguided Christians have perpetuated this nonsense. They give off the impression that to become a Christian means the party is over – that being spiritual means being miserable. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, to become a Christian means the party is just beginning. When you have the joy of Christ in your heart you can't help but smile and have a good time. If you don't believe me, come by the church office during the week. Chances are you will hear singing, laughing, and people having a good time. My number one rule for the staff is to have fun. Ministry is supposed to be fun. I have the most fun job in the world! I get to tell people how much God loves them and that God's love can help them live better lives. How much fun is that?

God created us to play and to enjoy the life He created! I would go so far as to say that God requires us to have fun. The Bible tells us as much in our text for today. I hope you allowed the scene in our text to wash over you. Jesus was teaching when a bunch of playful kids ran toward him. The sour disciples were appalled. You can imagine their reaction. "Children ought to be seen and not heard. Where are their parents? Can't they see these kids are interrupting Jesus? Get these kids out of here!" The Bible says that Jesus became very angry at the disciples. He felt the kids were treated unfairly. He said, "What are you doing? Let the children come to me. Don't get in their way. In fact, unless you can receive the Kingdom like these kids, you will never be able to enter it."

What did Jesus mean by this bold statement? Children are receptive, dependant and trusting. They bring nothing but themselves and their joy. Jesus says that unless we are able to receive God and His Kingdom like that we will never understand God or life. Wow!

G.K. Chesterton was a profound Christian writer who inspired C.S. Lewis. He wrote something that I have never been able to forget. He wrote that "God is the last child left in the universe." He said the rest of us have just lost our joy. I have thought a lot about those words and I believe Chesterton was on to something. When we read Genesis we see that joy radiated through God as He created the universe. When God created you and me, there was great joy in His heart. For example, do you think when God thought about creating a daisy, He just said, "Um, daisies be"? I

don't think so.

Tony Campolo talks about the time when his grandson was just a little boy and he would play with him on his knee. He would bounce him up and down, lift him up into the air, and bring him down to the ground. Campolo said that every time he would do this his grandson would say, "Do it again, Pop! Do it again!" And Campolo would do it again. Of course, his grandson would say to him once more, "Do it again, Pop! Do it again!"

Campolo says that when God created that first daisy something childlike inside the heart of God said, "Do it again! Do it again!" And after the 4th and 5th daisy God said to himself, "Do it again! Do it again!" And after the 50 billionth, trillionth daisy God was jumping up and down, clapping His hands saying, "Do it again! Do it again!" We have a God of joy, fun, and play!

But something happened to our world. We lost our joy. We lost our sense of fun and laughter. Sin and cynicism crept in and caused us to lose our ability to play. God wanted us to get our joy back, so He decided to come to us in Jesus Christ. One of the things God said to us in Jesus was, "I have come that you might have life and have it in all of its abundance" (John 10:10).

In Jesus God was showing us His joyful personality so that we would get our joy back. At first, the world really did not know how to respond to this. We see an example of this in Luke 7 when Jesus speaks to the Pharisees, the supposed experts of the Jewish Law. They thought they knew everything there was to know about God. Jesus comes along and says, "You just don't get it. I come eating, drinking and having a good time and you accuse me of being a glutton, drunkard and a friend to sinners and tax collectors." Someone once said that basically Jesus was accused of being a party animal! They thought Jesus was playing too hard. They thought they had figured God out, but they hadn't. They thought God was not into fun, games, and play, but they were wrong. They just could not see that Jesus was trying to get us to enjoy life again.

Do you know what Jesus first miracle was in John? It occurred in a small town called Cana at a wedding party. Now, a wedding party back then could go on for an entire week! Jesus was invited to this party. So, I want you to appreciate this. One of the first scenes of Jesus in John is not him

teaching in the plains or holding a sick person's hand; it is Jesus at a party! Well, after a few days they ran out of wine. What do you think Jesus did? Help clean up and say goodnight? No! He told some folks to fill several large jars with water and he performed his first miracle by turning all that water into wine. So, Jesus' first miracle in John was not healing the sick, feeding the hungry, walking on water, or raising the dead. His first miracle was making 180 gallons of wine so a party could continue!

You can read the story of Jesus turning the water into wine over and over again. You can send it to scholars and theologians trying to find some great theological point, but you will never find it. The great truth of that story is this: sometimes Jesus did things for fun! Jesus was showing us how to get our joy back and for our joy to be full.

I think of it this way. When I was a little boy and would get grumpy and grouchy, my dad had a clever way of changing my mood. He would not lecture me. He wouldn't tell me that I should be grateful for what I had and not complain. He would get on the floor with me and find a place just above my belly button and blow air bubbles on my tummy. He would do it until I smiled and gave into laughter. Quite simply, this is what God did for us in Jesus. God got down on our level and embraced us so that we might get joy back in our lives.

So, you have homework to do. This week your homework is to go out and let yourself be loved. Go hack at a golf ball. Take dance lessons and learn how to dance. Turn on your favorite song and sing like no one is listening. Go rent Caddy Shack (the edited, TV version!) and laugh your way to joy!

Bernie Segal, the great doctor who uses laughter and love to heal people, talks about how he saved his own life. He was at death's door and decided to find a bunch of videos of The Three Stooges. He watched them over and over again and laughed his way back to health!

I came across a wonderful quote from an 85 year old woman from the hill country of Kentucky. I believe these words express what I am trying to communicate today:

"If I had to live my life over again, I would dare to make more mistakes next time. I would

relax. I would be sillier. I would take fewer things seriously...I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would have more actual troubles but fewer imaginary ones. You see I am one of those people who lived seriously and sanely hour after hour, day after day. I've been one of those persons who never went anyplace without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it over again, I'd travel lighter."

What would you say if you had to finish this sentence: "If I had to live my life over, I would..."? Don't wait to experience God's joy in your life. Do it now! Learn to play again. Every moment is a gift. This is why we call it "the present." Enjoy God's enjoyment of you. Enjoy your life, have fun and play. When you do, you will be very close to the Kingdom of God. Amen.