

Maturing into Irresponsibility

Mark 10:13-27

29 in our "Jesus Stories" series

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January 24, 2014

Prayer

Hallelujah, Lord! We pray that your mercy would lead us this morning, that you would help us, Lord Jesus, to preach. Lord, I pray that you would help us to think, that your word would enter us and cause us to think and to ponder, to feel, and to go places that we haven't been before. Help us to preach, Father, in Jesus' name, amen.

Message

There is a legend of a holy man who lived each moment in incredible joy and wonder. His life was like a dance. One night he camped outside of a village and a man from the village came running to him in the evening yelling, "Give me the stone! Give me the stone! Give me the stone!" "What stone?" asked the holy man. "Last night, the Lord told me in a dream that you would come and camp outside of our village and you would give me a precious stone that would make me rich forever!"

The holy man rummaged through his bag and pulled out a stone. "The Lord must have meant this one. I found it on the path while I was walking the other day. You certainly can have it," said the man. And he handed it to him with a smile. The man from the village gazed in wonder and in awe. It was a diamond, easily ten pounds (the largest in the world). He took the diamond and he left, but that night he turned and turned, unable to sleep. Early in the morning he went back to the holy man and said, "Give me the wealth that makes it possible for you to give this diamond away so easily!"

What kind of person could find a ten-pound diamond and then just give it away so easily?

Mark 10: 13-16

And they were bringing children (Pardion—little children the kind that don't know the value of things, but do know the value of people, like Jesus. Little children seemed to really like Jesus, and that tells you something about Jesus.) to him, that he might touch them and the disciples rebuked them.

Dostoyevsky wrote: "*The soul is healed by being with children.*"

I doubt Jesus' soul needed to be healed, but maybe with children he felt most at home and they felt most at home with Jesus.

But, "*the disciples rebuked the children.*" Children are irresponsible. I mean, the guys were beginning to see that Jesus might just, in fact, be the Messiah. What if one of those ruggats stuck his finger up Jesus' nose or wet himself while sitting on the Messiah's lap?

"They rebuked the children."

Mark 10:14-16

But when Jesus saw it he was indignant (he was livid, furious) and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Literally, "of such is the kingdom", like the kingdom of God consists of children.

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

We must receive the kingdom like children. Last week in Matthew, we read that we must "become like children to enter." So how do children receive and enter?

How do children enter your kingdom and receive your blessing?

You know, Jesus never asked you to study Greek, Hebrew, Karl Barth, or Fyodor Dostoyevsky, or church history, or systematic theology. But he does ask you to study, behold, and observe things like lilies, birds, seasons, your own body, and children.

How do children enter your kingdom and receive your blessing?

Susan and I had four children in order that we could study them and find out how to receive and enter the Kingdom of God. And so we did, for quite some time, and the results were kind of amazing.

How do children enter your kingdom and receive your blessing?

- They enter boldly.

Well, they enter boldly and demand attention. And this must have been one of the reasons the disciples rebuked them. Children actually believe they are God's gift to the world if for no other reason than that they exist. That is: They don't earn their value; they assume it. They think: "Of course you should kiss me and hug me, and bless me because I'm me, and I'm wonderful and what's a Messiah anyway?" Jesus loved that.

When my children were little, they'd expect me to hang their artwork over the Mona Lisa – if I had it. Their art still hangs in my office. They may wonder why, and if they do, it's because they've forgotten how great/ valuable they truly are.

I heard of one little girl who was found spread eagle against a huge windowpane in her house while a lightning storm raged outside. Her parents exclaimed, “What are you doing?” She screamed back, “Mommy, Daddy – God is taking my picture!”

Of course He is. Little children actually believe they are so valuable that of course someone would die for them. That is, they believe the truth.

Do you believe the truth?

I remember as a child, I had no doubt my parents would die for me. I was that valuable and my parents affirmed that belief. Unless they’ve been abused, little children assume their own priceless value.

How do children enter your Kingdom and receive your blessing?

- They enter boldly.
- They assume their own priceless value.

That is, they assume the truth: “*For God is not willing that one of these little ones should perish.*”

So, how do they enter?

When I was a child, I’d walk past secretaries, and elders, and other pastors, right into my Daddy’s office, the kingdom of the Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church. I’d march right in and sit on his lap.

And Jesus said, “*You must enter the kingdom like a child.*” Wow! Through the outer courts, past the high priests, and the brazen altar, behind the veil, climb up on the ark of the covenant, sit on the mercy seat and say, “Daddy, I’m home!”

“You must enter the kingdom like a child.”

Children enter boldly, like they have that much value. They demand attention *now*, like they’re that valuable at that present moment. That moment is where we live, feel, touch–encounter persons. So, Satan tries to catch us in the past with guilt, or he tries to get us to dwell on the future in anxiety. “God wants us to attend chiefly to two things,” writes C.S. Lewis. “Eternity itself or the moment at which time touches eternity the present moment” – Eternal life, now.

The children on Jesus’ lap are not thinking, “What have I done to deserve this?” –the past. They are not thinking, “What will this require of me in the future?” They’re thinking, “I like this man with the beard. I know Him. He knows me.” Eternal life is knowing Him. Children live in that moment.

Children enter boldly, assuming their value...

How do children enter your kingdom and receive your blessing?

- They enter boldly.
- They assume their own priceless value.
- They don't believe they've earned anything in the past.
- They don't worry about earning anything in the future.
- They live in the moment.

Yet they don't believe they've earned anything and don't plan to have to earn anything. They live in the moment.

You can know *about* people in the past and worry about them in the future, but you can only know a person now, in the present moment, like those toddlers knew Jesus and the Pharisees did not.

How do children receive things? Well they receive everything as a gift, that's the only way.

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- They assume their own priceless value.
- They don't believe they've earned anything in the past.
- They don't worry about earning anything in the future.
- They live in the present.
- They receive everything by grace.

They receive everything by Grace because every child is completely poor. Children can't own a house or a car or have a bank account. Legally, they are dirt poor. My children were dirt poor. Yet, they lived in a wonderful house, rode in a fine Dodge Caravan minivan, and ate wonderful food, none of which they'd purchased—poor but rich.

You can be dirt poor and watch the sunset, hug a child, look at the Grand Canyon. You own none of those things—dirt poor, yet rich.

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- They receive everything by grace.
- They're poor, but rich.

Children are poor and everything is gift, gift, gift. And children are legally powerless. I mean a one-year-old cannot sue his mother. When my children were little they were absolutely powerless.

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- They're poor but rich.
- They're powerless but powerful.

And yet no one had more power over me than them. I'd die for them. If someone would choose to die for you that would mean that you have incredible and mystical power over that person: *"Blessed are the meek (powerless, the little children) for they shall inherit the earth."* *"Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

Poor, powerless, and ignorant: I remember one day Jonathan accidentally knocked over a mannequin in a department store when he was about three. He started screaming at the top of his lungs, "I killed her! I killed her! I killed her!" Little children are stupid – and they know it. In other words, they're humble. Therefore they must receive things by grace, as a gift. They can't buy them, can't acquire them by power, and they can't comprehend them with the mind. I mean Jonathan thought that the mannequin was alive, that everything was alive. Everything comes by grace. They're ignorant and so they live in wonder.

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When my kids were little, they could stand in front of the toilet for hours flushing the handle in absolute awe. Watching the water going down the hole, they'd put the toilet paper in and it would come undone. And light switches were just amazing!

For a little child, a ten pound bag of mud is easily as wonderful as a ten pound diamond, maybe more wonderful because, in fact, you can do more with the mud. It's not until they learn that anyone can own mud, but few can own diamonds, that they want diamonds more. Yet the more diamonds we own, the more they begin to look like mud.

When Coleman was three, first thing, I'd ask him in the morning when he'd come down the stairs: "Coleman, what did you dream about?" And every morning, it was the same thing: "Stars, rainbows and school buses." You see, school buses were just as wonderful as rainbows and stars. They were all incomprehensible mysteries that came through grace.

As we get older, we begin to not only comprehend internal combustion engines in school buses, but we also begin to understand the visible spectrum of light and the hydrogen fusion reactions in stars. We comprehend stars, but maybe that's only an illusion. Maybe the talking star in Narnia was right: "Burning gas! Burning gas! That's not what a star is, just what a star is made of." Carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, that's not what a person is, just what they're made of.

Well, the day Coleman came down the stairs and I said, "Coleman, what did you dream of?" And he said, "I didn't dream of anything." I could tell he was feeling all grown up. That day my heart sank because he's my last, and I won't get to see the world through children's eyes again until we have grandkids or I volunteer in the nursery.

Ravi Zacharias wrote,

While traveling to Chicago by train, I sat behind a man and his young son. The boy seemed intrigued by the passing scenery and described to his father everything that he saw. He talked about some children at play in a school yard. He mentioned the rocks in a small stream and described the sunlight's reflection on the water. When we stopped for a freight train to cross our track, the boy tried to guess what each car might be hauling. As we neared the city he expressed excitement over the waves of Lake Michigan and told about the many boats in dry dock. At the end of the trip, I leaned forward and said to the father, "How refreshing to enjoy the world through the eyes of a child." He smiled and replied, "Yes it is, especially if it is the only way you can see it." He was blind.

The kingdom exists in eternity, in perfection, yet perhaps it's also at hand – like Jesus said, it's just that we're blind, and we need the eyes of a child to see and receive it. Children live in wonder. For them the world is still alive, as if they are a breath from someplace else and they don't yet know the world has died.

When Jon was little, we'd have to stop and talk to all the VW Bugs in the parking lot at the grocery store. We'd hold hands and talk to the VW. He'd say, "Hello Herbie. How are you today? I'm fine. You're a nice Herbie." I was standing there looking around. It didn't matter if Herbie didn't talk back, or if I said, "Jon, it's just a car." It didn't matter; he'd still talk. It's not just that he saw the movie *Love Bug*. It's that he expects the whole world to be personal, all filled with life. Maybe he is a breath from God and he still remembers life!

Maybe he had it right when the mannequin fell over and he thought he'd killed her. I mean, he expected everything to be alive. Children have faith in life. They value life. They're born not knowing the value of things. I mean, a bag of mud is easily as valuable as a ten-pound diamond. However, they're born knowing the value of relationships, with persons. They value presence, even an infant. They value presence, touch and time, not responsibility, plans and programs. For a child, a map is not "the way." A person is "the way." That's how they navigate. That's how they get around.

My daughter Becky, like I told you, when I came back from a trip with my dad, she said, "Oh, I was so worried you'd get lost and then I remembered that you were with your daddy and so you couldn't get lost." That's how they navigate, a person.¹

A dictionary is not "the truth," a person is "the truth." Diamonds are not "their life," a person is "their life." Don't get me wrong, children will fight over things, but they don't really know the value of things. However they do know the value of a person at least better than most adults.

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- They live in the present.
- They receive everything by grace.
- They're poor but rich.
- They're powerless but powerful.
- They're ignorant and so filled with wonder.
- They don't know the value of "things," but depend upon "persons."

When I was little, I remember thinking, "If I could just get to my Father's lap, I had everything." And everything was grace. I'm saying little children know how to trust.

¹ A little girl named Sachi kept asking her parents if she could be alone with her brand new baby brother.

Well, he is life and we are created by that life.

Madeleine L'Engle writes, "We forget that we are more than we know." Diminished by the dirty devices of this world, that's why creativity plummets.

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- They trust.

Brennan Manning wrote, "Ruthless trust ravishes the heart of the Father."
They trust and so, unless they've been abused:

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- They're ignorant and so filled with wonder.
- They don't know the value of "things," but depend upon "persons."
- They trust.
- They receive freely and give freely.

They receive freely and give freely. They exude life. They constantly sing and dance, and make noise. As a young father, I'd just yell, "Stop it!" And then I'd struggle because I needed to tell them what I wanted them to stop. "Stop being so happy! Stop singing, dancing and enjoying life so much! Have a little respect for the dead."

Every little child even if they're crippled, they just naturally sing, dance, draw pictures and express themselves without shame, at least until we send them to school and teach them to do all that for a grade.

And children are very unpretentious.

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One time at this pizza restaurant in California, Elizabeth had to have been about three, and I got up to use the restroom. Well, I'm on the other side of the restaurant, by the bathrooms, and Elizabeth stood up on her chair and yelled across the dining hall at me. She stood up and yelled, "Daddy, Daddy, don't forget to wipe!" and then smiled and looked around at everyone so proud of herself and her wisdom. And why not? It was valuable information she had just acquired, and she wanted to share it with the world.

Children are unpretentious. They don't know how to act. They know how to play, but not act. Adults know how to act. Adults know how to give away everything they have, deliver their body to be burned, and yet they can do it without an ounce of love. Adults know how to do good deeds, say the polite thing, and obey the law. They know how to act loving without a drop of love. Well, I wonder what would happen if we began to see ourselves as children? If we could look in a mirror and see children looking back.

An Evian water commercial is shown:

A young man is walking down the street. He sees a reflection of a similarly dressed baby in the glass door of the bus. He backs away from the bus and heads towards a car, looking in the passenger side rearview mirror only to see the same reflection of the baby looking at him with the same surprised expression. He looks surprised and then thoughtful as he looks away towards a store window. He walks over to the window and stares openmouthed to see his reflection is this baby dressed exactly as he is. He lifts his leg sideways, and the baby follows. He puts his leg down at the same time as his reflection and looks dumbfounded at it. He then starts to playfully dance, looking around to see if anybody sees him. A woman stops and notices, so he stops. They look at each other, and they turn to see a baby girl dressed like her in the window reflection. She reaches up to test whether or not the reflection is of her. It is and she begins to dance. The scene takes place with everyone that passes by and all see themselves as little children. They all playfully dance in front of the mirror. The commercial ends with an older lady approaching the scene with her dog. She starts dancing and her bald, pink sweated, baby reflection looks back at her with an: "Oh my" astonished expression, mouth closed eyes wide open!

Wouldn't it be nice to find a mirror like that?

Well, parents are bringing their children to see Jesus and every little child sings, dances, laughs and gives themselves away. Every little child is a happy exhibitionist: "Hear my song, Mr. Jesus" "See my dance, Mr. Jesus." "Look at the picture I made you, Mr. Jesus." "Did you hear my burp, Mr. Jesus?"

Children don't know how to act, fingers in the nose, pulling on the beard, and Jesus seems to like it. They seem to have no shame, and Jesus seems to like it. Guys breaking through roofs, a prostitute weeping at his feet, tax collectors in trees, and Jesus seems to like it.

The disciples rebuke the little children, they don't like it: "Grow up – act responsible." And Jesus grows indignant. He's livid! Does Jesus not want us to act responsibly?

I'm always fascinated by words that religious people use, but I can't find in the Bible. "*Responsible*" is one of those. People may mean different things, but most would agree: children are irresponsible.

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- They trust.
- They receive freely and give freely.
- They are unpretentious.

They enter the kingdom and receive blessings irresponsibly. Children are irresponsible and surely now we're getting at the heart of the disciples rebuke.

You know, we disciples of Jesus over the years have even come up with this idea of the age of responsibility, or accountability, (like I mentioned last week) the age when a child becomes able to respond to Jesus. It's at that age that in many churches children are first allowed to be baptized and take communion. If they come for baptism before that age, responsible disciples rebuke them. It's a strange concept when baptism symbolizes salvation and salvation only happens when we're dead—incapable of one good response.

It's doubly strange when Jesus says regarding the children and infants: "*to such as these belong the kingdom of heaven.*" It consists of children. "Let them come to me! Let them come!"

Now, I realize that there's a lot of good discussion on this topic and so, at The Sanctuary, we'll both dedicate infants and baptize infants. But it is clear Jesus saves, and He saves irresponsible infants. My question then is does He ever save anyone that is responsible? For we were all saved when we were: "*dead in our trespasses and sins.*"

At least children know they're irresponsible. I mean maybe when you "act" responsible, that's exactly what it is: an act—a pretentious lie that you tell the world and tell yourself and you begin to believe. And that is that you love when you don't love. For in fact, you have to make yourself love because love is not yourself. It's an act. And we call that ability to act "responsibility."

Well, love is not your act. God is love, and love is God, and He's not your act.

It seems to me that if you think you're "responsible", and I mean by that:

If you think the Way is dependent on you—the Truth is dependent on you,

If you think the Life is dependent on you,

If you think Love is dependent on you,

If you think you're responsible for Love, you cannot freely receive Love

and freely give love.

If you think you're responsible for love you can no longer respond to love as a child.

Children are irresponsible and so able to respond to love, and God is love.

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Now, please don't think I'm saying children are perfect. One thing that I know, from studying my children, is: they're not. For reasons that I only barely begin to understand, they are born into this world with a terrible lack. They are born without the "knowledge of good and evil," so they don't know what is good and what is evil.

They don't know that God's Word is good and trustworthy,
and the snake's lies are evil and not trust worthy.
They don't know that it is good to be a child,
and it's good that God the Father is God the Father.
They don't know that it's good to not be the Creator,
for only then can you be loved *by* the Creator.
They don't know that it's good to be the creation of Love
and evil to think that you create love, for God is love.

In other words, they don't know that grace is good, and pride is evil.

So what's wrong with all of us children? We don't know that it's good to be a child, so we take knowledge and try to be "grown up"—try to exalt ourselves. We try to justify ourselves instead of allowing God to justify us, and exalt us and create us.

- We don't want to be created good, we want to create the good.
- We don't want to receive everything by grace, we want to never need grace.
- We don't want to live in wonder and gratitude, we want to comprehend everything, control everything and believe we've earned everything.
- We don't want to be loved by God the Father, we want to be God the Father.
- We don't want to be irresponsible, but absolutely responsible for everything, for then we're not dependent on anything, nor vulnerable to anyone. Then we don't have to trust another. We can be entirely independent and forever alone – in hell.

What's wrong with us?

- We don't want to be children because we don't know the good and because we lust for hell, and we don't know that it's evil.
- We don't want to be children because we each want to be rich young rulers – sad and lonely as hell.

Jesus says, "*You can only receive the kingdom as a child*" next verse: Mark 10:17-27

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luke records that this man was a ruler that is he had many responsibilities.

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

No one capable of a good response but God.

You know the commandments:

And remember the commandments describe love.

Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother. And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus looking upon him loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.

Little children follow, that's how they navigate.

At that saying his countenance fell and he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples "How hard it will be for those who have riches.

"Riches" is the word *chrema*, which can also be translated matters, affairs or business. This man had riches that were also responsibilities. Laying down his riches, he'd lay down his responsibility. He'd be like a child, utterly dependent, having to trust the one he followed. The rich young ruler is not a story about responsible money management. Jesus is asking him to have no money to manage. Well, the man wanted to be a Christian, but he was just too dang responsible, he was just too grown up.

to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved? "

The rich young ruler was probably a model of virtue, ready to Jesus a big gift if he'd only asked it. So they say "Who can be saved?" Jesus had just said "children..." So then what rich young ruler would ever empty himself of all power, authority and wealth in order to become a child?

Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God."

It is impossible for men and women to be saved, to choose to become children—impossible for men, but not for God and Jesus looked at them. They, in fact, were looking at the richest of all rulers.

Reality was His responsibility, and He is forever (young), "making all things new." He is the richest, youngest ruler – Prince Jesus, and He was on His way to Jerusalem to give it all up, more than diamonds, everything. So, Paul writes, "*Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though He was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave being born in the likeness of men.*" They wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger an infant.

Thirty some years later, He hung on the tree crying, "*Abba Father into your hands I commit my spirit.*" I don't think Jesus, in His earthly body, chose to do that because He figured it all out and made what we'd call "a responsible decision." I think He saw what His Father was doing, and He wanted to follow. Unpretentious, child-like, He wanted to follow. In John 5:19, Jesus said that he could only do what He saw the Father doing, which means at least two amazing things:

1. God our Father has an unpretentious child-like heart, so He is constantly giving Himself away: "See my universe?" "See my flowers?" "Do you like my art?" "You are my art – I love you and I give all of Me to you, body broken, blood shed. I give it to you.

God our Father has an unpretentious and child-like heart and

2. Jesus our Lord and Savior had a mirror. So even though the universe is constantly upheld by His Word of power, which seems like quite a responsibility to me, Jesus looks into his Father's eyes and hears Him say, "*My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*" And He always remains His Father's child.

I think, Jesus had the knowledge of good and evil and yet forever remains a child. Saint Paul wrote, "*As in Adam, all die, so in Christ, shall all be made alive.*" That means the story of Adam, in the garden, is your story that has happened. You have taken of the tree and you're dying or you're dead. And the story of Christ, in the garden, is also your story that is happening and will happen. You will die with Him and rise with Him. You will have the knowledge of good and evil, yet not exalt yourself, but forever remain a happy, happy child, in the image of God.

So, Jesus had a mirror and he suffered, died and rose again:
to give you His mirror, his Father's eyes;
to give you the knowledge of God's infinite love;
to give you the knowledge of the Good, God is good;
to give you His Spirit, the Spirit of the Son.

"For you did not receive the Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear," writes Paul, *"but you have received the Spirit of sonship. When we cry 'Abba Father' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."*

In Jesus, we see the Father's heart.

In Jesus, we see the Father's judgment; we see Jesus reflected in His eyes.

In Jesus, we look into a mirror, which James called, "*the perfect law, the law of liberty.*"

We look and hear "*You are my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.*"

And that mirror changes us

That mirror cuts us down to size and sets us free

That mirror shapes us in the image of God

That mirror exposed the false self, reveals the true self and makes us able to respond to Love.

Love makes us in His own image

Love turns us into children that know the Good and choose the good in freedom.

And love causes us to give ten pound diamonds to strangers with a smile.

And don't worry, if you're not there yet, it's happening because the story of Jesus is your story.

It doesn't mean that we won't do things that are difficult, painful and hard. It means that we will, but not because we have to, but because we want to, because love has become/is who we are.

You all have a Heavenly Father that adores you. For some reason I also had an earthly father that adored me – his eyes were my mirror. But in my insecurities, I'd look away and try to please him with good deeds, responsible behavior, hard work, seminary, etc.

He would brag about me, but his favorite story about me used to kind of embarrass me. He liked to tell about a day, when I was a child, there was a horrific thunderstorm in Littleton, Colorado and my dad had run out to put sand bags in front of the house so it wouldn't flood. I remember, mom and I were standing in the front room looking out at dad; lightning was crashing all around.

All of a sudden there was this huge flash and a bolt right next to dad. (Peter makes a crashing sound) Like that! And I turned to my mom and I said, "I'm gonna go out there with Dad!" My mom said "No, you're not going out there with dad! You could die! You could get struck by lightning out there! You could get killed!" And I said, "If Daddy's gonna die, I'm gonna go die with him!"

My dad loved to tell that story, and it embarrassed me because I'd think, "Oh Dad, that's silly, I was just being a child. That was irresponsible." But I was thinking about it this week: If I had a ten-pound diamond I would've dropped it. I mean, I really was ready to give up absolutely everything and follow my Daddy all the way to death.

This is the incredible thing: It wasn't because I felt responsible. It was simply because I wanted to be with my Dad and do what he was doing. So I've thought how silly I was just being a child. It wasn't responsibility. It wasn't to my credit, but maybe that's exactly to point. It was to His credit. His love had captured my heart, and now my trust could ravish his.

Communion

So, Jesus did what He saw His Father doing.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "*This is my body given to you. Take and eat it, and do it in remembrance of me.*" And in the same manner, He took the cup saying, "*This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. And do it in remembrance of me.*"

In the morning, He did what He saw His Father doing: He gave Himself up on the tree for the sins of the world as He lifted His head crying, "*Father into your hands I commit my spirit.*" There He ravished the heart of God the Father. And now, the way the Father looks at Jesus is the way the Father looks at you. You are in Him and He is in you. Jesus even said it in the prayer, "*Father, you have loved them as you loved me.*" He looks at you like He looks at Jesus. And this is your mirror: (Peter points to the communion table) The love of God broken and poured out for you. This is how much He loves you. We see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

You are not responsible for this.

This is responsible for you: "*We love because He first loved us.*"

So, children, come to the table, sit on your Father's lap, and receive His love. Now, let Him shape you in the image of Himself. Amen?

Prayer

We love you Lord. Thank you Lord, for letting us love you. Thank you that we do love you, because it's not to our credit, it's to yours. Thank you that you are filling all things with yourself. And you are love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Benediction

(Holding the communion bread and wine) And so, may you not feel responsible for this. I think feeling responsible for this means sitting there and saying, "Oh God, you know, I've been trying so hard not to lust. I confess that I lust, and I'm trying hard not to drink too much beer, and I confess that. I'm trying hard not to do this or do that." When I do that, do you know what I think of? I think of lusting, getting drunk, all sorts of things that have to do with me and how I'm making myself responsible for this. But let this be responsible for you.

And I think what that means is that you look into the eyes of the Father, and you can do this in a lot of different ways. My wife actually sits in front of the mirror and looks in her own eyes and imagines God looking back at her. When you imagine what's true, I think that's called faith.

What I do, I am not as visual, but I'll be feeling guilt, I'll be struggling, I'll be thinking, "God, I suck as a pastor! And the church..." And I just have to stop. And I say, even out loud sometimes: "You love me, don't you? You like me!" Then I forget about the beer I drank or the thing I saw, or the whatever. And I don't really want them so much anymore. I allow this, (Peter points to the communion table) the eyes of my Father, to be responsible for me.

And so, may you believe the love of God for you and allow Him to shape you in His own image – that of a happy, happy child. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.