

2 September 2012

Reading: Matthew 11:25-30 (NT page 977)

Reader: Stan Menzies

Sermon

The text verse for the sermon is: ²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”

The text this morning is remarkable for a few reasons. Matthew skilfully applies the insight of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament in our reading. Last week I explained that however the Wisdom teachers of the Old Testament differed on a few aspects of the implications of serving God, they all agreed that true wisdom starts when serving and obeying the Lord God.

In our reading Jesus says that the wise and the learned – referring to the Jewish leaders forgot all about the insights of the Wisdom teachers namely to trust only on God and not on their own insights. In Matthew’s Gospel it seems as if the

Pharisees and the teachers of the Law were only interested in themselves, in their interpretations of the Law of Moses while missing the real essence of the Law namely to love God with all their heart, soul and mind, and their neighbours as they love themselves.

Instead of trusting more on their own insights, they must be more like the “νήπιος” as it is written in the Greek text. The “nepios” is translated with children in the NIV while metaphorically it means “childish, untaught, unskilled” which I think is exactly what Jesus meant. He was making the valid point that children trusts unconditionally. They carry no grudges and they always act in good faith. Even if you ask children to tell the so called “white lies, they always come out with the real shocking truth without having any malicious intention.

So Jesus is actually saying to all his listeners that they must be like children in their faith, only trusting and relying on God.

Jesus is inviting them to come to Him trusting that he will help because with His help each and every yoke will be easy to lift and carry and every burden will be light.

A Yoke was a wooden or iron frame for joining two oxen or other draft animals so they could pull a plow, cart, or other heavy load. A yoke generally consisted of a single crossbar with leather or rope nooses or wooden rods that were fastened around the animals' necks. A Yoke was used figuratively as a symbol of hardship, submission, or servitude. Jeremiah wore a yoke to symbolize his message that Judah should submit to Babylon. Now Jesus says his yoke is not something heavy to carry. He invites his followers to just hand all their problems to him – He will help them and carry it for them.

And this is exactly what children almost naturally does. They will take the hands of their parents even if they are not sure where their parents are going.

And if they are like children in their faith they will most surely learn and know that Jesus is the true Son of God and that he can be trusted.

It is therefore not surprising that Jesus said to his listeners on two occasions that the kingdom of heaven is intended for people who has faith like children – trusting and relying only on God.

And I think to us the message is plain and simple. We must just be like children in our faith – trusting and relying only on God like children do with their parents and their carers which they trust.

It is remarkable to just hear children pray. They are so honest and truthful. There is a book called “Dear God” that is a collection of children’s prayers. I found a few which I will share with you, just proving Jesus’ point about children:

“Dear God

Thank you for the baby brother - but what I prayed for was a puppy”

“Dear God

If you give me a genie lamp like Aladdin I will give you anything you want except my money or my chess set”

“Dear God

Are you really invisible or is it just a trick?”

“Dear God

I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I can never do it”

If we think of God as our one and only focus – we will never have divided loyalties. If we trust in God in everything we do think and say – we will never feel burdened and alone. If we take the hand of God – we will never be scared or uncertain

about the future. If we listen to God and obey his commandment to love all people – we will never feel hopeless and without direction. If we have faith in Him – we will never feel deserted or lost. If we love Him we will be able to love even our enemies...

May we indeed be wise and become like children in our faith – knowing that God is the only One who can be trusted. And if we feel burdened and lost let us do what children usually do namely to cry out for help as loud as possible with arms outstretched to their parents – which in this case will be God our Father.

Robbie & Lisa May you be reminded by looking at Mila, and experiencing her childlike trust in you, of how you can trust God too, may you be in awe of God's love every time you look at her. May she grow up and through your example of faith trust God unconditionally. Amen