Sunday School Rally Day
Rolling Meadows - 1977

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

ST. LUKE 18: 15-17

It was toward the end of a very busy and trying day. Jesus and His disciples were tired and exhausted. ~~But finally~~ Now, at last, they had some time to themselves. The multitudes had left. And then it happened: "SOME PEOPLE BROUGHT THEIR BABIES TO JESUS FOR HIM TO PLACE HIS HANDS ON THEM. THE DISCIPLES SAW THEM AND SCOLDED THEM FOR DOING SO."

You can appreciate how these disciples must have felt: "Of all times, not now! That's all we need is a bunch of kids running around, pestering Jesus! Can't they see that Jesus is tired and worn out. We all need some PEACE AND QUIET." ..... Isn't that the way it is with us adults? How often don't mothers say something like: "Not now dear, mommy is much too busy. Maybe some other time." Or father comes home from work and settles down in his favorite easy chair. His children come to him and want to PLAY or just to SIT ON HIS LAP AND TALK. And he says something like: "Please, not now! DADDY put in a very ~~rough and trying~~ hard day. All I want to do now is sit back and relax and unwind."

Well, It was not that way with JESUS. JESUS was never TOO BUSY or TOO TIRED for children. He did not just ENDURE or TOLERATE or PUT-UP-WITH children. He LOVED THEM DEARLY and MADE THEM AN EXAMPLE for us adults. So it is that we have one of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture: "JESUS CALLED THE CHILDREN TO HIM AND SAID,

'LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME AND DO NOT STOP THEM, BECAUSE THE KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS TO SUCH AS THESE. REMEMBER THIS! WHOEVER DOES NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD LIKE A CHILD WILL NEVER ENTER IT."

Notice that these parents "BROUGHT" their babies and children to Jesus. They didn't just "send" them off to Sunday School and Church. There was none of the DOUBLE STANDARD: "Do as I say! Don't do as I do." ..... I wonder how seriously we parents take the PROMISE and COMMITMENT we made for our children at the time of their BAPTISM. Or were those JUST EMPTY WORDS? Remember what we vowed? -- That we would "BRING OUR CHILDREN UP IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD" -- that we would "teach them the holy Ten Commandments, the Christian Creed, and the Lord's Prayer"-- and that "as they grew in years, we would place in their hands the Holy Scriptures, bring them to the services of God's house, and provide for their further instruction in the Christian faith, that, abiding in the covenant of their Baptism and in communion with the Church, they might be brought up to lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ." As I say, HOW MANY OF US TOOK THAT PROMISE SERIOUSLY? Statistics show that there are ALL TOO MANY PARENTS who said, "YES" -- and then promptly forgot all about it.

I thank God for my mother and father. They took their responsibility seriously. The very first thing they taught me was that JESUS DIED FOR ME -- yes, especially for me!

And then I learned that this LOVE OF JESUS was not only for me -- but FOR EVERYBODY, for THE WHOLE WORLD. By "precept and example" my parents taught me that while I could not always TRUST or RELY on other people to KEEP THEIR WORD or THEIR PROMISES (not even them), I could always TRUST AND RELY ON JESUS. I guess, more than anything else, that TRUST IN JESUS took me into the ministry. My parents did not have to talk me into doing this. JESUS DID!

At this point I want to say a WORD OF THANKS to you SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS. Very often you are forced to do the COMPLETE JOB -- to FILL IN TOTALLY for what FATHERS AND MOTHERS ought to be doing -- PARENTS who DROP THEIR CHILDREN OFF and then GO BACK HOME TO BED or the SUNDAY NEWSPAPER..... Well, "Hats off" to you SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS --- for yours is the SPECIAL PRIVILEGE of teaching children to KNOW GOD. You can tell and teach them that GOD IS JUST LIKE JESUS. HE IS JESUS! And HE HAS TIME FOR THEM. HE doesn't just "toss them aside" because they are ONLY CHILDREN. JESUS said He came to "SHOW US THE FATHER." That's the way GOD IS -- like a REAL FATHER -- one who REALLY CARES -- One who has a HEART -- One who wants His children to "sit on His lap." You ~~and~~ can TEACH THEM that God wants to be WITH THEM -- no matter HOW MUCH IT TAKES -- even the DEATH OF HIS SON JESUS! GOD WANTS TO BE WITH THEM, and HE WANTS THEM TO BE WITH HIM -- NOW and FOREVER!

Recently I read the MOVING STORY of a father whose six-year-old son, Timothy, had died of cancer. The father told how Timmy was a little "songbird." He loved to sing "How Great Thou Art" -- except he would make up his own words. Once he was standing on the back steps -- just singing at the top of his voice: "When I see my sandpile; When I see my swing, When I see the airplane (one was just flying over at the moment), MY GOD, HOW GREAT THOU ART." And the father went on to describe how when he discovered that Timmy had CANCER, he asked him one day what he thought heaven would be like. And the little six year old's FAITH said: "Well, you fall asleep and then you wake up and Jesus is standing there shaking your hand and saying, 'Hello, friend.'" ..... The funeral was a great VICTORY CELEBRATION -- HOW GREAT JESUS IS and WHAT A REMISSION HE BROUGHT FOR THE CANCER OF SIN..... And Timmy's father said he could not help hear a CHOIR OF ANGELS singing: "When I see the jasper sea, the golden streets, those guys in white robes, MY GOD, HOW GREAT THOU ART."

"LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME AND DO NOT STOP THEM, BECAUSE THE KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS TO SUCH AS THESE. REMEMBER THIS! WHOEVER DOES NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD LIKE A CHILD WILL NEVER ENTER IT." The King James Version has an excellent translation that says it well: "SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME TO ME." Sometimes it takes a lot of "SUFFERING" for parents to BRING THEIR CHILDREN to Jesus. JUST GETTING THEM READY is often "suffering" enough -- to say nothing about the other HARDSHIPS and SACRIFICES

that have to be endured. But CHRISTIAN PARENTS "SUFFER" this -- because they know and are sure that their children are IMPORTANT TO JESUS. They know and are sure that JESUS wants to LOVE AND BLESS THEM. They know and are sure that "THE KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS TO SUCH AS THESE."

JESUS welcomed the children -- and He welcomes everyone who COMES AS A CHILD. In Christ, God is doing His thing for a world which is LOST IN ITS OWN ADULT CONCEITS. He is doing it even now! He is WELCOMING EVEN YOU and EVEN ME. "OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD." Amen.