

Text: Psalm 78:1-7; 145:4

Title: “FOR THE CHILDREN ... FOR GOD’S GLORY”

What do these stones mean? That’s one of my favorite stories in all the Bible. What a great miracle God performed among His people. But God didn’t want it to merely stop with that generation. He wanted families sitting around their campfires at night telling and retelling the stories to the children. And in 2006 parents would sit on the beds of their children at bedtime and read the Bible stories of God’s remarkable work in history. This is God’s way. We know that from places like Psalm 78. Turn there with me.

More than likely your copy of the Bible includes a little inscription just under the chapter designation: “A maskil of Asaph.” Do you see that?

We know that Asaph was a Levite and a music leader in the service of King David. Here is a leader of the people of God who is challenging the congregation about the importance of teaching ... and particularly teaching that communicates God’s glory to future generations.

Read Psalm 78:1-7.

So what is he saying? Asaph is saying to the people of God, “I am about to teach you something very important that has been passed from our fathers to us.” And his goal is clear:

Psalm 78:4 - We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.

This makes so much sense. It’s God’s truth, God’s wisdom, God’s Word ... and it is always true and right. Let me show you the wisdom of God in decreeing that the truth (the Word) of God is to be transmitted generation to generation, starting with children. This is amazing how wise God’s truth is. If every family and every church would heed this wisdom, it’s amazing what would happen.

1. God’s way makes sense because of the way children develop.

God creates us, and He knows full well how we develop. He knows that the early years of a child’s life are the formative and foundational years. And God wants us to take advantage of those childhood years to put the spiritual and moral foundation in place. That’s what God wanted them to do when He gave them the Law in the OT.

Moses said to Israel, “These are the commands that God gave me to give to you so that as you keep them and obey them, it will go well with you and your children.” And then he said:

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 - These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

So the Lord wants us to impress these things on your children. Start when they are children and continue to remind them of the Law of God.

Just think about the moral and spiritual development that takes place in children from birth to 12 years old. Most experts agree that the prime time for their moral and spiritual development is

between 5 and 12 years old. What we do during this crucial 8-year window of time will determine their lifelong habits, values, beliefs and attitudes.

Statistics show that most people who trust Jesus Christ as their Savior do so during this age span. The best time for a child to come to faith in Jesus Christ and to begin to grow in the knowledge of Him is during this window of time. Of course it's great to be saved whenever it happens, but stop to think about the advantage to a person coming to faith in Christ before bad habits, values, beliefs and attitudes are ingrained.

ILLUSTRATION – Jim Franklin, one of our missionaries in China, was telling me this past week that in Communist China, it is illegal for children under the age of 18 to attend church ... only adults may attend. The Communist Party does not want anything interfering with their efforts at indoctrinating the children. You see they know if they can put the foundation of Communism in place when the children are young, they will have them for life.

Honestly, I'm not sure that most parents really believe that the spiritual formation of their children is the single most important issue. When it comes down to it, we really spend most of our time on their physical, intellectual and emotional needs. But do we realize that if our children are to develop properly physically (what they do with their bodies), intellectually (what they do with their minds) and emotionally (what they do with their feelings about themselves and others), it will happen as they have a solid spiritual foundation in their lives. All the rest builds on that.

Now parents are central in this matter. God has placed the responsibility for the spiritual development of children squarely on the shoulders of parents. But the church is crucial. The church, the community of faith, is to support the families in doing that.

Psalm 78:4 - We (the people of God) will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.

2. God's wisdom makes sense because it's the most effective way to shape the future for God's best.

Knowing the importance of the childhood years, it makes sense that we would seize upon that opportunity to shape the child's future for God's best ... and through those children to shape our church's future, and our nation's future.

What if we could look into the future of our land and see something greater and better than the pessimistic outlook that seems to prevail.

ILLUSTRATION – Mary Lynn Stewart told me a remarkable story recently. It involves a boy whose family first came into contact with our church ten years through the Benevolence House ministry. Soon the boy attended Ft. Travis, our after-school program for neighborhood children. He began to show exceptional potential. One of our ladies Sunday School classes raised the money to send him to a special event in Washington D.C. And just this year, that boy has been accepted into one of the most prestigious prep schools in our city in part because of the tutoring that the volunteers gave to this boy.

Do you realize that there are more children in America than the two largest ethnic groups combined. Children will define the future.

The health, future, and well-being of the church of the future depends on Psalm 78:4 happening: **“We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.”**

3. This makes sense because of the special place the Lord has in His heart for children.

Just think about all that Jesus said about “little ones.”

ON SCREEN - Mark 10:13-16 - People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Because Jesus favors children so much, don’t you think that there might be a special blessing in store for the church that is truly like Jesus in favoring these “little ones”?

Psalm 78:4 - “We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.”

4. This makes sense because of the fierce battles our children will face.

I have two big questions that haunt me. **Question #1 – “What in the world are we doing to our kids?”**

It’s frightening what our children are facing. Research indicates that kids ages 2 to 7 years old average nearly 25 hours of exposure to mass media each week. For the ages 8 to 13 years old, the number balloons to 48 hours each week. We’re letting someone else raise our children.

One out of three children born in America is born to an unwed mother. One out of every four children now lives with a single parent.

According to the Nat’l Center for Disease Control almost 1 out of 10 teenagers are sexually active before the age of 13. And the number is steadily rising. One out of every ten eighth graders smokes daily. Alcohol use and drug use is epidemic among teenagers.

What in the world are we doing to our kids?

Question #2 – “What in the world are we doing for our kids?” Aren’t they worthy of our very best investments to make a difference?

So often as parents our greatest priority is for our children to have things better than we had them ... to have what American’s have come to idolize as “the good life.” Unfortunately, what we call the “good life” has no connection to what God calls the “good life.” While we think of “the good life” in terms of possessions, a good education, popularity, physical health, is that really what the Bible calls “the good life”?

Micah 6:8 - He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

If children are to really enjoy “the good life” by God’s definition, they must have a spiritual and moral foundation that permits them to lead holy, humble, God-honoring lives. This is what gives a child real meaning, purpose and joy that lasts a lifetime.

How will children gain this knowledge? It is the duty of parents, primarily, but also members of the Church to expose children to the ways of God. During these formative years, children develop their decision making perspectives and patterns. So to engage our kids at a young age is a critical choice we must make as Christian parents supported by the Church.

“FOR THE CHILDREN ... FOR GOD’S GLORY”

Psalm 145:4 - One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.

Churches like ours with a rich heritage of faith must see that heritage not as a possession to be guarded but as a legacy to be passed forward. We are running a relay race; the baton must be handed off, so the next generation can run their race.

So our church stands at an important juncture. If we are to truly be the people of God, we will take seriously the counsel of Scripture: **“One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.”**

“For the Children ... For God’s Glory” is not merely a building program. It is a call to a renewed commitment to pass to the next generation the faith that has been entrusted to us. Energized by the Holy Spirit we must accept the challenge to marshal our resources toward the mandate of God to strengthen and support families as they raise their children “in the training and instruction of the Lord,” (Eph.6:4).

“For the Children ... For God’s Glory” is a two-fold challenge:

First, it is a challenge to build a great ministry. The best way to influence the future of our homes, our church, and our nation is to invest extensively in the lives of children and their parents. Research shows that children establish the basic moral and spiritual foundation for the rest of their lives *before* they become teenagers. That means that we must make every effort to reach and support families as they help their children build that foundation in the proper way.

This will call for the best of our efforts and resources. We must not continue to try to staff our children’s Sunday School classes and weekday ministries with a skeleton crew. They deserve the best we have to offer in the way of teachers. We have great and dedicated teachers in SS, Fort Travis, children’s mission programs, and worship care to name of few. But we need more. We need people to see that one of the greatest mission fields in all the world is right before us in our children and their families.

Do we continue to reach and minister to people of all ages? Absolutely. But do you see that the investments we make in children will pay the richest dividend of all

A key person in this is our Minister to Children. We are currently in the search for that person. Pray that God will send us the very best person to lead us in this area. But with the new ministry budget year I will challenge us to reallocate as many resources as possible to put toward ministry to children and their families.

But we need to go a step further. It is not only a challenge to build a great ministry.

Second, it is a challenge to build a great facility. All over Tarrant County new, well-equipped schools are being built to provide for the academic education for a burgeoning population of children. Why would God's people not want to make a similar investment in a facility that accomplishes an even higher purpose ... the spiritual education of children?

Earlier this year our church approved the Master Plan that designates the next building we build in the renovation and renewal of our campus would be an educational building that would serve as the nerve center for our ministry to preschoolers, children and their families. It will essentially become a Family Activities Building.

On Wednesday night, Sept.20 our Master Plan team will recommend the employment of a contractor to begin the design phase of the building. Somewhere around February of next year, those designs should be completed and we will have the opportunity for the church to see, ask questions, and approve the plans and the beginning of construction.

Our initial estimates are that this building, with the very best furnishings, equipment and security we can afford, will cost approximately \$5 million. That's a huge sum of money to raise, but with the grace of God, it can happen. We've put our trust in God before and He has never failed to help us do His will.

Starting in about a week I will meet with the various groups of leaders in homes all over the city to ask them to begin to pray for God's provision for this vision. In October we will have a series of lunches here at the church for every church member who will attend so we can tell the story and ask them to begin to pray.

As has been our practice for the last several years, we don't want to incur indebtedness so we'd like to have at least 50% of the construction cost in the bank before we start.

Church, let's trust God, step out on faith and see what God will do. The next two months will be devoted to sharing the need and praying for God's provision.

Then from Harvest Day, November 5 thru January 31 let's give generously in order to have 50% or \$2.5 million to begin construction in the Spring of next year. You ask, "Where is that \$2.5 million going to come from?" I don't know exactly. But I believe that there's that much and more in our pockets if we will trust God and give generously as God has prospered each of us.

It is the greatest single project our church attempted since the construction of this sanctuary nearly 50 years ago. But aren't we glad that those people then trusted God and made the sacrifice.

But I believe that there's nothing nearer to the heart of God than children. I believe God will bless the church that wants to bless children.

I believe that once this facility is operational, families all over the city will know of the investment we have made to help them raise their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. They will see that we are serious about the importance of Christian education for children ... children of every ethnic background and socio-economic level.

I would hope that when this building is completed that in a prominent place the words of Psalm 145:4 would be displayed:

“FOR THE CHILDREN ... FOR GOD’S GLORY”

Psalm 145:4 - One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.

Now all this is important because of something God has done. Return with me to Psalm 78. Look at vv.5-7:

Psalm 78:5-7 - He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, 6 so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. 7 Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Do you see it? This is how God wants His kingdom to expand.

And the end result is this ... **“They (the children as they grow) would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.”**

We must pass this legacy of faith to the next generations ... so they will put their trust in God ... so they will believe God ... believe in His Word ... receive Christ and grow in their knowledge of Him.

CONCLUSION

The future generations will put their trust in God as we pass along to them what we believe.

We've been talking about children in general ... I want you to see our children in person ... we're going to sing what we believe to the children ... then we're going to say what we believe to our children.

Church, let's start today with a renewed commitment to pass our faith to them. Let's let them know what's most important for them to know ... the truth. Let's let them know what we believe.

*A COVENANT
“FOR THE CHILDREN ... FOR GOD’S GLORY”*

Understanding God’s desire that each generation shall declare His glory to the generations to come, and

Understanding God’s desire that the legacy of the Christian faith continue from one generation to another;

We the people and the families of Travis Avenue Baptist Church pledge that we shall strive to be ...

- *Passionate in our devotion to Christ,*
- *Consistent in a godly lifestyle,*
- *Courageous in our witness to the lost,*
- *Selfless in our service to others,*
- *Faithful in the instruction of God’s Word, and*
- *Sacrificial in the sharing of our resources,*

So that the children of the coming generations will be transformed into life-long followers of Jesus Christ.