

“Nothing to Bring”

Sermon – Don Johnson

Hanna City Presbyterian Church

Sunday, December 20, 2009

Mark 10:13 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." 16 And **he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.**

I remember when I was a mere four years old. Just a little kid, living in Houston, Texas, I could barely see over the kitchen table. And one day in mid-December I thought to myself, with a sigh...“It’s that time of year again. So much to do, so little time to do it.”

Even as a four year old, I was not one to linger when there is work to be done, so...I grabbed my list, I grabbed my jacket, and I headed out the door; yelling over my shoulder to my mom, “I still have Christmas shopping to do and I’m sure I won’t be back anytime soon.” There were grandparents to buy for, and aunts and uncles and cousins; my mom and dad, my sister and brother. There just seemed to be no end to the list of gifts to buy ...

So as I pulled out of the garage on my Schwinn Red Phantom bicycle – whitewall tires, brown leather seat ... Shu-wee, what a sweet bike that was. But, as I headed down the street, I was not enjoying the smooth feel of my bike as ... I traveled down the hills and around the curves ... No, Christmas was only days away. My head was spinning. This is such a stressful time of year! So much to do, so little time to do it.

As I rode along I thought ahead to the mall, I just knew it would be like pulling teeth to find a parking space. This is a “cars, cars, cars” world ... Four year olds don’t get any respect. No buying power – no parking places.

I remember thinking, “If it weren’t for the Mall Cops, I would just ride my bike straight into the stores and bypass the frustration of finding a spot to park and then the humiliation of not being able to find the spot you spent all that time finding in the first place.”

So once at the mall, I went from store to store, searching for just the right present ...I would find myself looking at a gift, trying to envision how it might be received. Over time I gathered one gift into the basket, then another.

After a while I finally ambled up to the counter, gifts in tow, and it happened again! *I still get* no respect. I have to wave a twenty dollar bill at the clerk just to get their attention, “Yo! Down here! A paying customer! Think you could ring me up?”

Well, after obliterating my piggy bank I finally had all the presents gathered. Now I had to find the wrapping paper, to get all the presents wrapped, and to wrap some presents once again in boxes and brown paper to mail them to family across the country. Then, all there was left to do, was: to sit and worry ...When these presents were opened, “Would it be the right size? Would it be the right color? Would they think I spent too much, or not enough?”

Life is rough on a four year old at Christmas.

Don't you all remember that about Christmas ... When you were young?

How stressful it was? How much there was to do? All the planning involved? Preparing meals for family gatherings? Food to bring, presents to buy? Don't you all remember how you worried if you picked the right gift or if someone might be disappointed in what you bought? If you would be able to make it to all the relatives' houses. If people would just get along for one day out of the year?

Don't you remember Christmas, as a child, in this way? [Pause]

No, I don't either.

Because when we were children, we had nothing to bring and everything to receive. Nothing to bring. Everything to receive. That is Christmas. That is how we receive the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

There are those who will enter the kingdom of God. There are those who will not enter the kingdom of God. Those who enter the kingdom receive the kingdom of God like a child. Nothing to bring. Everything to receive.

We bring nothing of earthly value. But with child-like faith, we look to Christ alone for salvation, and ... We receive everything of eternal value.

We have nothing to bring. We come to Christ, in a very real sense, as He came to us: as a child; with humility, with love, with a longing to know and to be known. Utterly helpless, wholly dependent upon the mercy and grace and provision of others.

We held the Savior in our arms, so that He could hold us in His.

Hear these resounding words of grace from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 55:1 "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

We bring nothing.

Any measure of talent or treasure granted to us is simply given back to the Giver of every good thing and every perfect gift (James 1:17). We simply return, we offer back to our Creator what He has already given to us. We embrace our Savior with a simple yet earnest faith that is itself a gift to us. We come to our Savior in humility, like a little child – joyfully approaching the Christmas Tree on Christmas morning.

We have nothing to bring ... yet, in our complete poverty, we have everything to receive.

Do you remember the wonder and the awe and the sheer delight of Christmas as a child? Well, "You haven't seen nothing yet." The kingdom of heaven awaits ... those who will receive it like a child. A

kingdom of which all that is good and beautiful and true in this world is but a foretaste of the splendor which is to come.

The Gospels tell us that the kingdom of heaven is like the treasure hidden in a field. Once discovered, in joy a man goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. The kingdom of heaven is like the pearl of great price, for which the searching merchant goes and sells all that he has and buys that pearl. [Matt 13:4-46]

You see, at Christmas time the *real world* breaks into this transient and passing age; through joy and festivities; through the giving of gifts and singing of carols; through the delight in the eyes of a child as they awake on Christmas morn'. At Christmas time we get a glimpse of the eternal.

We celebrate the mercy of Almighty God as He entered into history on behalf of His people, to seek and save the lost. We celebrate the good news of great joy for all the people ...

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
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So, whether you have called yourself by the name "Christian" for four score years or you do that for the first time this very morning – Come to the manger; come to the Christmas child; come on bended knee, without money, without price.

Those who enter the kingdom receive the kingdom of God like a child. *Nothing* to bring. *Everything* to receive. That is Christmas. That is how *you* receive the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.