

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: Our Legacy Must Involve Children, Matthew 19:13-15

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INTRODUCTION: Last week, I spoke about legacy and the importance of it. Legacy is what we spend our lives creating and what we leave behind when we leave this world. Since we only have one life to live, it's important to spend our life wisely. Most of us don't like to think about our own mortality, do we? In fact, I believe most people never think about it.

God has given you resources: He's given you a mind. He's given you a purpose. He's given you ideas and the ability to think creatively. God has given you the ability to make a difference only you can make in the world. God might not be calling you to change the course of history, but I am quite certain he is calling you to follow his will, and in doing so, you'll make a difference in the way he wants. I am wearing out this statement, and for good reason... "God accomplishes his will through his people."

Recently, I learned once again, God will accomplish his will, and if people are disobedient or are just not interested, he will raise up someone else to accomplish his will. Something happened, and I racked my brain trying to figure out how to fix it. I ran out of ideas. And, then I laughed when I saw someone else take the idea and run with it in a way I had not thought of. The reason this happened is because God was raising up new people to move on with his agenda.

Here are my points:

1. The disciples thought Jesus was too important for children.
2. The disciples thought Jesus was too busy for children.
3. Notice the scripture says "people"—not parents—brought children to Jesus.
4. Jesus said, "Let them come, and don't hinder them."

For a legacy to really last, it must touch the youngest audience possible and in a way those young people will grow up and pass it along to another young crowd.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 19:13-15 ¹³ *Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.*

¹⁴ *Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”* ¹⁵ *When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.*

First, THE DISCIPLES THOUGHT JESUS WAS TOO IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN.

If you read the first twelve verses of this scripture, you’ll see Jesus was involved in a serious teaching about divorce. The tone of the scriptures is very serious. The Pharisees asked him a question about divorce, and he gave them a serious lecture about marriage and divorce. Meanwhile, there were other adults nearby who were rounding up kids to take to Jesus.

I can hear the disciples now—*Get those kids out of here? Who do you think you are? We are having an important discussion!*

ILLUSTRATION: Many famous people have personal managers. I have a friend who was Michael Jackson’s manager early in his career. And, in Nashville, I’ve met a person or two who were personal managers. A manager helps prioritize a schedule. A manager takes care of details including scheduling. In this case, the disciples were acting as Jesus’ manager. They didn’t mean any harm. They were just trying to protect his schedule from interruption. The truth is Jesus was never too important for children.

APPLICATION: Here is the application. Let’s think for a moment about what’s most important in the church. If I were to ask you to write down what’s most important, I am sure there would be a variety of answers, and all of them would be good. I am sure someone would say “worshipping God” and other things like that. As the pastor of the church, please permit me to decide what is most important for us as a congregation. On Wednesday nights, we are feeding kids before children’s choir. They are hungry. I believe the most important thing is to feed those kids.

Really, we have Appalachian type poverty right around us. Our partner churches of First Baptist and Forest Hills Baptist are helping us, and we are putting partnership funds to work. Bro. Terry is figuring out how to add another bus route for Sunday

morning. If we expand our children's Sunday School, it means kids will arrive hungry...which means...you've guessed it. God forbid a child would walk in this building hungry and leave hungry.

If Jesus wasn't too important for children, neither should we be. Next—

Second, THE DISCIPLES THOUGHT JESUS WAS TOO BUSY FOR CHILDREN.

In some cultures, children are perceived to be a nuisance and sent off to play with other children while the adults talk about “important things.” Of course, in America, that happens, too, but in some other cultures, it's more profound. In today's Bible story, children of that day were taught by parents and stayed close to home. The idea of kids breaking in on an important meeting to hug Jesus would have been unheard of. It would have been just awful.

Jesus had a busy schedule. He had to take time off to rest. And, to think a group of adults would bring kids and interrupt his schedule! What were those adults thinking? Did they think Jesus had nothing better to do? They got a stern rebuke from the disciples! I wonder what their rebuking words were. *Get these kids out of here! Don't know you know how busy Jesus is! Jesus is not here for the children!*

How many of you were saved when you were a child? Here's what that means. It means Jesus wasn't too important or too busy for you when you were a child. Jesus meets us where we are and at our level of understanding.

Review—

- The disciples thought Jesus was too important for children.
- The disciples thought Jesus was too busy for children, and—

Third, THE SCRIPTURE SAYS, PEOPLE—NOT PARENTS—BROUGHT THE CHILDREN TO JESUS.

ILLUSTRATION: In the 1970s, bus ministry was common in churches. I remember it quite well. I am not sure why bus ministry went away, other than the workers got tired or the workers didn't train people to replace them. Possibly another reason it went away is because a church started a bus ministry merely because a church down the road was doing it...we are pretty good at copying other

churches, aren't we? We're not so good at being original. Merely copying the ministries of another church is certain to result in failure.

The reason I point out to you that the scripture says people brought the children to Jesus is because it does not say their parents brought them to Jesus. Maybe they were the parents, we don't know. I'm glad the scripture doesn't say "parents" because if it did, we'd have a theology that it's parents' responsibility—not others—to get their kids to Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was in the fourth grade, I had a really mean literature teacher. She was so mean she had absolutely no business in the classroom. I don't mean she was strict. I mean she was just mean. In the class was a son of a sharecropper family. His name was Jimmy. My teacher went off one day because Jimmy needed a haircut. She was just downright awful. One day, she went off the deep end about church bus ministry. Keep in mind this was a public school. She started ranting that it was the parents' responsibility to get their kids to church. As a boy, I remember thinking, "What if their parents don't attend?"

I want to share with you the importance of creating a legacy for young people. I took her words personally because my mom drove our station wagon around on Sundays getting kids for Sunday School.

Review—

- The disciples thought Jesus was too important for children.
- The disciples thought Jesus was too busy for children.
- The scripture says "people"—not parents—brought children to Jesus.

Last, JESUS SAID "LET THEM COME, AND DON'T HINDER THEM."

- If we feel children are a nuisance, then we hinder them.
- If we don't care for them or make our church welcoming and warm to them, then we hinder them.
- If we do not do whatever it takes to reach them for Jesus, then we hinder them.

ILLUSTRATION: A few weeks ago, I asked our staff to share with everyone a person who was influential in their lives. I gave everyone a few days' notice and

then we sat around the table in the conference room and listened to each other's stories. All of them were meaningful, and each one was different. One of the common denominators was those special adults knew us by name. They knew us personally.

APPLICATION: Let's get to know our church kids by name. Let's not treat them like a herd of kids.

I have numerous memories of church people who were kind to me as a child. I've told you of some of them. My earliest memory is when I was four-years-old and went to a class where a teacher told stories and had toys appropriate for my age. Her name was Areta McReynolds, and she was the wife of Jim McReynolds of the Grand Old Opry. She was so gentle and kind and took a genuine interest in her four-year-old class. She has gone to heaven now, but while she was alive, I called her to thank her for making the class so special to me. I am sure many of you have similar stories.

CALL TO ACTION: I believe I have a prophetic word for our church. You've never heard me say this before because I haven't said it. In fact, I cannot believe I am saying I have a prophetic word from God. As you know, I am not much of a charismatic. I have not heard a voice from heaven. Neither Samuel nor Elijah met me on the sidewalk with a prophecy. No people came to my office and told me God told them to tell me something. So, I want to be clear: What I am about to tell you, I committed to prayer for the last month. I wanted to make sure these words are from the Lord and not from me.

Here it is: **Reach the children, or God is going to close the church.** I am cautious saying this because I've never had such an impression before.

You may say, "But we *are* reaching the children," and my answer to that is yes, we have made great strides in reaching children. This church has a strong history of reaching children. Our children's facilities are quality. All of you have volunteered to help with children in some way or other. But, we need to do more for children. We need to expand our Sunday School. We need help with transportation. We may need to feed them on Sunday mornings. From now on, we need to focus our direction in the area of children. What will that look like? I don't know exactly, but all of our ministries should have a large focus on children. Recently we had a large neighborhood party, and many senior adults and middle-aged adults helped. On

Wednesdays, our deacons are coordinating feeding kids. After that, they go to children's choir and then to missions classes. We have to give them rides. We need help on all these things.

As our children's Sunday School grows, we'll need more teachers and helpers. If you are in a Sunday School class where everyone is retired, perhaps your class can meet another time during the week and help the children's department on Sundays. If you have a class that's not growing, perhaps you can dissolve the class and start one with children who really need you.

I want us to commit as a congregation that we will do whatever it takes to reach the children around us.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 18:1-5 ¹*At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*

²*He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*

Jesus told us who was most important in the kingdom of heaven. We don't have to wonder about it. He told us.

To come to faith in Christ, you must become like a child. What in the world does that mean? I believe it means you must take on the simple faith of a child. A child typically believes, loves, and trusts a loving father. It means we call him Daddy and believe he'll forgive us of our sin, like he said he would, if we would merely repent.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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