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Bringing Our Children to Jesus; Matt 19:13-15
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Introduction – When you take a look at the larger context of Matthew 19, Jesus has addressed every member of the family. When He taught on marriage and divorce, He addressed the husband and wife. When he taught on singles, He addressed adult children in the home. In today's text He addresses children in the home. Every member of the family unit finds instruction from the Lord.

The emphasis of today's passage is that God has a plan for children. In terms of the kingdom of God, childhood is not a stage in waiting. Spiritual life and truth are not on hold until you reach adulthood. Children are precious and valuable in the sight of God. He entrusts parents first and foremost with their upbringing and discipline and nurturing in the Lord. Eph 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." That is, correcting them in accordance with Scripture and teaching them the truths and gospel of the Scripture. Parents, that is our number one calling. Everything else comes second and Scripture is our sole guide and authority. What we find in today's passage is a group of parents who are actually following their biblical calling.

- I. Parents Bring Their Children to Jesus
 - a. The implication of v13 is that these were parents. They desired to bring their children to Jesus that He might bless them and pray for them. They understood the unsurpassed value of having their children introduced to Jesus. There is no greater act of love and obedience that can be pursued in raising children than seeking the blessing of the Savior in their lives. Evidently these parents knew who Jesus was and they wanted to make sure their children did as well.
 - b. We can deduce at least one thing from their example, children's ministry belongs to parents. Parents we need to hear and understand this. We'll get to the church's role in the lives of children next week when we address the disciples. But for now, let it sink in that God gave our children to us and He calls us to bring them to Jesus. In fact nowhere in the NT will you find instruction to the church on children's

ministry. But you do find throughout Scripture God calling parents to be the primary disciplers of their children.

- i. Deut 6:4-7 – in the home of believing parents should be found an ongoing discipleship of their children, exposing them to the gospel and teaching them the things of God.
 - ii. Psalm 78:5-8
 - iii. We've already read the passage in Eph – parents, God's primary means for the salvation and discipleship of our children is given – gifted – to us. Can there be any greater joy for a parent than to lead their child to Christ and nurture their walk with the Lord?
- c. Which raises the question, how do we bring our children to Jesus? This is the goal of gospel, Christian parenting – We bring our children to Jesus by explaining, illustrating, and displaying the gospel as our salvation and our life! Under that umbrella we're now going to list 5 practical ways and 5 personal ways to pursue that goal.

II. 5 Practical Ways to Bring Our Children to Jesus

- a. Stories that explain the gospel and affirm biblical truths
 - i. Books for children (and teens), devotions, movies – make time to read to, read with, and discuss – examples
 - ii. Discuss sermons, SS lessons, awana verses
 - iii. Utilize a variety of sources to expose children to Truth
- b. Our Testimonies
 - i. Find the right time and occasion to share your testimony with your children – testimony of how you came to Christ – testimony of how you have applied the gospel to your new life
- c. Everyday Illustrations
 - i. Look for everyday illustrations as occasions to illustrate the gospel – Spring, butterflies, when our children sin, when we sin, communion, baptism, weddings, funerals
- d. Family Worship
 - i. Establish a regular, ongoing time for family worship
 1. At the table, One morning or evening of the week
 2. Make it simple – read a portion of Scripture, explain it, apply it, pray together for others and for one another
- e. Prioritize and participate in the life of a gospel saturated local church

- i. We have gotten to a place in our culture that we live as though we are quite comfortable in our “Christianity” without the church. We live life in a way that church has taken more than a backseat among our priorities.
- ii. I get why people give up on church, it’s full of sinners. We have clicks and quirks, sometimes we don’t get along, and there are so many other distractions that appear to be more fulfilling.
- iii. But when we speak of evangelizing the world and growing in the grace of God and being rooted and grounded in the truth, the local church is still God’s Plan A and there is no Plan B.
- iv. You’ve heard the saying, “When you find the perfect church, don’t join it or you’ll mess it up.” The truth is there is no perfect church. The church is made up of imperfect people, led by imperfect pastors – but who worship a perfect Savior.
- v. Church is messy at times, but its when we turn to God in the mess and follow the Lord that we grow and display the gospel – not when we leave it or neglect it.
- vi. The church is where the truth is affirmed, the gospel is proclaimed, and believers are encouraged and strengthened.

III. 5 Personal Ways to Bring Our Children to Jesus

- a. It begins with our own heart and life.
 - i. Is Christ our greatest treasure? Is there sufficient evidence in our lives that our children know we treasure Christ above all? Children can spot hypocrisy a mile away. They know if Jesus is our everything or if He’s simply an add-on somewhere down the line of our loves. Is Christ our treasure or nothing more than an admission ticket?
 - ii. We are so prone to place other things and people foremost in our hearts where only Christ can reign. As parents we love our children and we would do anything we could for them, but if not careful we can easily place them above Christ in our affections. That’s not love. That’s not in their best interest and certainly not in ours when our children become our idols.
 - iii. When we love Christ most, we love them best!
- b. Discipline in the Lord

- i. We don't correct and admonish and train our children according to the world's philosophy and psychology, we correct and discipline our children according to Christ, according to Scripture.
 - ii. If a child never hears the words "that's wrong" "that's sin" and there are consequences for sinful behavior, not only have we not prepared our child for life, but far worse, we haven't prepared them for salvation. They must come to a place of understanding where they feel deeply that they need a Savior. When we raise them to believe they are the center of our universe and can do no wrong, they won't need the Bible, the church, or Jesus.
 - iii. When we correct our children, we must explain the reason why behavior is either acceptable or unacceptable. Take them to Scripture. Take them to the gospel. We must be careful not to unknowingly communicate that being a Christian is nothing more than being moral, than simply following a list of rules. That's legalistic fundamentalism, that's not Christianity. We adhere to God's Word because His way is life and the way of sin is death.
- c. Worship of the Lord
 - i. Do our children see us worship at home? Is the gospel our life such that we don't go through the day without spending time with our Father? Do they hear us pray?
 - ii. And how about our worship at church? Do we sing the truths of God from our hearts or mumble through? Do we delight and feast on His Word or do we eagerly wait to leave? The way we worship communicates loudly where Christ is in our affections.
- d. Confession and Repentance
 - i. Nothing demonstrates the gospel in our lives quite like being willing to confess and repent when we sin in the home. When our children observe that we are quick to repent of our own wrongdoing, they are seeing the new life in Christ in action.
- e. What has our faith in Christ cost us? If Christ is our treasure, somewhere along the way, it will cost us something, friends, fun, promotion, opportunity, wealth, and maybe more. Our children know what we choose no matter how we might try to explain it

away. Do we show Christ as our treasure when we suffer? What will your children remember most about you?

Conclusion – our text is about children, but it begins with us as parents. Childrens ministry begins with us. If we desire for our children to know Christ, love Christ, follow Christ, we bring them to Jesus through our own words and actions. We are their primary disciplers. Are we bringing our children to Jesus or to the world or to themselves? Watching over their hearts and souls begins by watching over ours.