Proper 9 A 2020 The Simple Gospel for Simple Children

She was a dear Christian lady who came to church regularly. You could count on her for bringing tasty food for potlucks and saying a kind word at the right time. Now as the years came and went, she no longer had the strength to come to church. So her Christian friends were glad to come to her.

During their visits, it came as a great shock to them to hear her say: I am coming to the end of my life. I hope I have done enough to get into heaven.

That is what the world teaches. Work hard at school and the office to get ahead and to succeed. It seems to be true in life when you see hard-working people wealthy and surrounded with countless creature comforts.

**Christians are tempted to work to get into God’s family**

If we are honest, there is a part of us that thinks that way too. Put in that extra effort to have enough to take care of your family. This thinking carries over naturally into the church. Christians are tempted to work to even get into God’s family.

It comes naturally to us to want to make God proud of us and to qualify ourselves as his children by the quantity of our good works. It is the way of the world. Jesus calls it being wise and understanding. Not in the ways of God but in the world. I wonder how much wiser we have become from all our computer searches with access to endless information?

It can lead to depending on what we know or at least our computers’ capability to know. What a shock to hear what pleases Jesus! It is not to become wise in the ways of the world. What pleases Jesus is not in amassing information, but in being little children.

In His prayer to the Father, He thanked Him for hiding the way of salvation to the wise and understanding of the world. He thanked His heavenly Father for uncovering His gracious will to little children.

Wisdom is not the problem. Jesus wants us to be as wise as serpents. Snakes know how to survive. Christians need to learn how to survive in the faith in a world that is evermore hostile to Christ. So our goal is to become wise in the ways of God not the world. To achieve this goal can only come as God’s gift. It is not of ourselves.

Little children depend on their parents for everything. They have no capacity to work or care for themselves. In the same way, God’s children depend on Him for everything, for His mercy, and to come into His family.

**Children are born into families, without any work**

So too Christians are born into God’s family. Our assurance that we belong to God does not come from our worthiness or the quality of our sanctified lives. The assurance and comfort of being in God’s family is found in our new, second birth, by water and God’s promise in baptism. In baptism God adopted us into his family and birthed a new life of faith that is unknown and kept hidden to the world.

What a comfort to know that Jesus has done all the work to bring us to His Father’s family. Christ has kept all of the law and then perfectly obeyed His father to lay down his life for the life of the world. This is God’s gracious will. Jesus died for sinners. He welcomes sinners into his home as forgiven and free children of God.

It makes no sense to our old way of thinking. We are trained to work hard and then deserve some time off because of our hard work. The longer we work, the more vacation time we deserve. This is foreign and strange in God’s kingdom. It is a place for sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes who are forgiven. The penitent thief and repentant Pharisees like Nicodemus and Saul of Tarsus are there not by their works but in being forgiven by Jesus.

Behold the forgiven family of God, for Jesus’ sake!

To come to Jesus for forgiveness is rest for our souls, undeserved and without merit. *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* God’s rest for us is receiving His peace when our sin was covered by His Son.

God’s rest does not mean for His children to do nothing. It is rest for the soul. But to love neighbour as yourself requires effort, it is work.

**Jesus changes the motive of work from merit to gratitude**

He does that by His own work of doing everything in the law and keeping the commandments. He describes it as a yoke and burden. A yoke represents the wooden harness of beasts of burden. The heavier the yoke the heavier the load to pull. Jesus carried the heaviest load by his active obedience of keeping the law and his passive obedience of dyeing for a broken world.

Now his yoke is easy for his followers because He freed them to walk in the way of all of God’s commandments as forgiven and loved children of God. The new motives of thankfulness and gratitude have replaced the old ones of earning God’s favour and deserving praise. Our yoke is easy because Jesus already carried it. Our burden is light because it is a joy to know we are welcomed into God’s family for Jesus’ sake. Even when we are called to suffer for it. His love is for all. His rest for our souls strengthens us, keeps on recreating us, and gives us unending joy.

Don’t be offended in being a little child of God. Jesus has carried your load and washed you clean in baptism. Simple Gospel for simple children. You have come into God’s family without any work and all by His cross. Now rejoice and bear much fruit for him out of joy and gratitude.