

Christian Education Sunday
September 20, 2015
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (NIV)

Do you see the mission field? What does it look like? Have you been praying for workers to go out into the harvest fields as Jesus has asked us to pray? If so, what do those prayers sound like? Are you picturing the mission out there and the many lost people outside of these church walls? Are your prayers for those who are sent with the Gospel to faraway places we can't go? Those thoughts and prayers are all good and well, yet this morning I want us to direct our eyes and hearts to a mission much closer to home. Do you see it? It is right here. The souls are right in front of us. Our mission is (give names of children and teens in church) and all of our children here at Amazing Grace. Our prayers are to include asking for workers (Sunday school and teen teachers) right here to faithfully work with the Gospel in this harvest field.

God makes it clear throughout His Word just how important this mission field is to Him. This is so clear from Solomon wisely advising us to train our children in the way they should go, to Paul encouraging us to bring our children up in the instruction of the Lord, all the way to our own Savior teaching us to let the little children come to Him and not to hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Since this work is so important to God I pray it is also important to us. So on this day we have set aside to focus on and celebrate Christian education, I pray we ask our Lord to bless, and guide, and direct us in this mission. For once again as we turn to His Word we learn that: **God commands us to teach His children.**

Do you know what I have never heard God say once in His Word? That we should just let our children grow and then choose for themselves what they want to believe. I don't ever remember reading anywhere in the Bible God warning us that we shouldn't be forcing religion and church onto our children. Nowhere does God say that we should let our children decide what's best for them and when they are old enough to let them choose their own path. In fact, what I keep hearing and learning from God in His Word is just the opposite. God wants us to guide our children. He tells us to set the path for them. God commands us to teach them what to believe and do.

Doesn't Moses also make this point unmistakable in what is known as his swan song for God's people here in Deuteronomy? This is because there is only one true God. ***“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”*** This God has given us His commands which can be summed by the word love. What did God want Israel, and what does God want us, to do with these commands? ***“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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”***

So what do you think? Do we see what God wants? He says impress His commands upon the children. Talk about them when you are at home or when you are away. Talk about them in the morning and in the evening. Talk about them when you are coming or going. The main point is to make God's Word a daily part of their life. We want our children to know God's Word so well that they can apply to every single part of their life. This seems like a lot of work, doesn't it? Just think for example how much time and effort we parents exhaust feeding our children from the time they nursed to solid food up to them eating us out of house and home. Then consider how much time and effort is made feeding our children's souls with God's Word. Now imagine we reverse the two. My prayer is that we would not have a bunch of malnourished and starving children here at Amazing Grace. God's commands us to teach His children.

Whose responsibility is this? Once again we see today it is primarily the job of parents to raise their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. But the Lord also gives this mission to us, His church. We are here to assist parents in this important work. It's why we have Sunday school and confirmation and VBS and Pioneers. But you don't even have to be involved in these to be a part of this responsibility of training our children. Every time an infant is baptized do you remember the promise you make along with the parents and sponsors? We promise **"to assist in whatever manner possible so that this child may remain a child of God until death."**

We have a good reminder right here in Deuteronomy of how to do this. Before we impress these commands and words of God upon our children Moses says, ***"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts."*** God's Word is to be a daily part of our lives. Before we are able to teach God's commands we need to know God's commands. Before we teach our children what God says, we are to show them by the way we live. Please don't ever, ever underestimate the example all of us are setting for our children! They are watching and learning from us all the time. We are not just starting Sunday school but we are going back to our regular Adult Bible study schedule today as well. What are we telling our children when we encourage them to be in Sunday School, when we push them into the classroom at church, but then we have very few of us adults in Bible Study? Are we showing them that being a Christian is a lifelong commitment - that we can never learn too much or get enough of God's nourishing Word - that we can never stop growing in the grace and knowledge of our Savior?

There was a little girl who attended one of our Christian day schools where they had to give their church and Sunday school attendance out loud each Monday. While most of the others kids would answer boldly yes and yes, on most weeks this little girl would have to say no and no. Her parents brought her to church around Christmas and Easter but very few times in between. One day at school this little girl walked up to the pastor and gave him a card. The pastor opened up this card and this girl had drawn a picture of Jesus. Then he noticed Jesus was clearly crying as she drew a big tear in His eye and a bunch of tears falling to the ground. The card said: *"I'm sorry" "I'm sorry that I make Jesus sad because I don't get to come and see Him very much."* Dear friends, don't you think this little girl had it right! I picture Jesus with tears in His eyes as well for these children He loves. This is Jesus who took babies in His arms and blessed them. This is Jesus who strongly rebuked His disciples who did not think He had time for this and said ***"Let the little children come to me."*** This is Jesus who, when asked about the greatest in the kingdom of God, went and got a little child.

So do we see our mission? It is to do everything in our power so that our children see Jesus. Let them see how Jesus knew every command of God and kept them, how Jesus heard the

Word of God and obeyed it. Jesus, already at twelve, was studying the Scriptures in the temple. He would have been the first one in the Sunday school room every week! Teach our children how Jesus did all of that perfectly for us and in our place so we can have His righteousness before God. Teach them how Jesus suffered and died for all the times we failed to study the Word, for all the times we haven't obeyed God's commands. Teach them to look to the cross where Jesus paid the price of all these sins for us. Teach them how Jesus rose again and comforts us with His love and forgiveness. It is my prayer this gospel forgiveness fill our homes and church and classrooms. May the love and forgiveness of our Savior motivate us to want to study and learn even more! Of all the things we have learned or will ever learn nothing compares to having learned Jesus is our Savior. Of all the things we will teach our children there is one thing that is needed, like Mary who sat at Jesus' feet listening to His Word; may we too choose what is better!

God commands us to teach His children. Did you catch that I want to emphasize they are not our children but they are His children? God created them. More than that God redeemed them – He bought them back with His own blood. Through baptism God claimed them as His own, and the Holy Spirit gave them faith. Through the Word the Spirit keeps working in their hearts. God allows us to have these children under our care for a time before we entrust them back into His hands. So do you see it? The mission field is right here in front of us - souls for whom Jesus died - souls Jesus loves. Pray for the workers to faithfully work this harvest field. Pray the Lord use us, all of us, so that all our children might find everything they truly need in God's Word and in Jesus' loving and welcoming arms. Amen.