

It is time face up to the warning and the challenge

## THE PROBLEM

### 1. WHEN the childlike spirit dies we stop RECEIVING

The joy of childhood. and its greatest thrill is to receive and the child lives for now. It is knows nothing of yesterday's past that haunts , nor is it anxious about the future. Oh! how careless we become as we overlay our today with yesterdays sin and failure and then we are concerned about tomorrows plans and aspirations. So we have no time for **now**. BUT **now** is the day of salvation. **Now** it is time for the empowering of the Holy Spirit. **Now** is the moment to receive what God wants to give you. Jesus says "*I stand at the door and knock* " Don't leave Him standing outside. Be a receiver of all God wants to do for you and wants to give to you. Open up your life to God's blessings and be a receiver today.

### 2. WHEN the childlike spirit dies we stop TRUSTING.

The simplicity of faith goes out of our lives. Sometimes children make you blush with shame because they trust us so intensely, so eagerly, even inquisitively. From dawn to dusk they trust us. Oh, if only we trusted God like that. The strident call of the Bible is for us to walk by faith and not by sight but when the childlike spirit dies we do not travel down that road of faith very far or very often. Our twenty first century world produces faithless, worldly men and women. Do you know how to recognise them ?

#### **They emphasise the external at the expense of the internal**

The focus is on having things so what I have becomes more important than who I am.

#### **They yearn for the carnal at the expense of the spiritual**

What pleases me, my feeling good, wanting to have a good time. The challenge for us is knowing the only thing that sustains you is knowing the Word of God and the special relationship we have with Jesus Do not become just another "man of this world".

#### **They live for the temporal at the expense of the eternal.**

Today's exciting "kicks" rather than eternities rewards.

### 3. WHEN the childlike spirit dies we stop WONDERING.

The child lives in a world of wonder - all things are big for them. Dad's tricks, Mom's stories, birthday parties and so on. Is it not wonderful to know that God loves you, cares about you, wants to help and guide you. Is it not wonderful that Jesus died on a cross for you. That He has given us a book full of great promises, a church to belong to, that He will hear and answers our prayers. It really is wonderful.

## ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Welcome to

CHURCH AT HOME

Sunday 11th July 2021

CHILDLIKE

Read through this outline and join with everyone else at 11 am

**HYMN MP 257** (to read or sing)

I am not skilled to understand  
What God has willed, what God has planned,  
I only know at His right hand  
Stands One who is my Saviour.

I take Him at His word indeed;  
"Christ died for sinners" this I read  
And in my heart I find a need  
Of Him to be my Saviour.

That He should leave His place on high  
And come for sinful man to die,  
You count it strange ? So once did I,  
Before I knew my Saviour.

And O that He fulfilled may see  
The glory of His life in me,  
And with His work contented be,  
As I with my dear Saviour.

Yea, living, dying, let me bring  
My life to Him an offering,  
That He who lives to be my King,  
Once died to be my Saviour,

*(It would be good if you said this prayer out aloud)*

O our gracious God and loving Heavenly Father  
Here we are again so we worship You afresh today.

Ours is such a strange time in so many ways.  
Help us Lord to discover again the joy, peace and blessing  
that comes through knowing You, and serving You.

AMEN *(You may like to say the Lord's prayer also).*

## BIBLE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

### CHILDLIKE

"of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"

Matthew 18:1-6 and 19:14

Do you ever find yourself listening to someone else's conversation ? With the advent of the mobile phone we are forced to hear one sided encounters. The Bible allows us to eavesdrop on a conversation or was it an argument going on between the disciples. Wonder how it started and why ? Was it because it seemed Jesus seemed to make a lot of fuss of Peter, James and John. Anyway they wanted to know who is the greatest? There was a strange reaction and answer from Jesus - He just looked around. What was He after ? A child. *"He took a child ... except you be converted and become as a little child you cannot see the kingdom of heaven "* (18:2,3) How amazing. Jesus wanted to rebuke His disciples for their pride, self seeking desire for worldly greatness - so He used a child

The child is in effect a model sermon about trusting, being submissive, wondering, humble, just standing there with the arms of Jesus around him. He sees some special attributes in the child which He commends since they are such a contradiction to the distrust and conceit displayed by the disciples.

Think about it for a moment, what will you see ?

**Humility** "whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child" (18:4)

Children realise they are small compared to grown ups They lack strength, wisdom, they need help and guidance. God wants us to be aware of how true that is of us - we need His strength and wisdom

**Trust** "trust in the Lord with all your heart" (Proverbs 3:5) Children trust their parents implicitly to meet their needs and our God wants us to do just the same ( see *Philippians 4:19*)

**Persistence** *"let us hold fast the profession of our faith" (Hebrews 10:23)*

The little child falls many times but never gives up until they learn to walk. Christians make mistakes so keep going, refuse to give up.

**Simplicity** *"I press toward the mark for the prize "* (Philippians 3:14)

Children constantly look ahead with anticipation and hope. What a challenge that is for the Christian believer.

Only a few days later Jesus is teaching about the controversial issue of divorce and marriage. Suddenly a group of mothers approach bringing their children to be blessed by Jesus. They were met with hostility, rebuffed and rebuked by the disciples. The disciples thought they knew best -Jesus was too tired. He was too important. Their job was to protect Him. Actually they were interfering busybodies. Then Jesus steps in again. There is something about a child do you see it ? What makes them tick? *"Of such is the Kingdom of heaven"* Note: not " of these". He is not talking about age but disposition and character. Do you see it ? He has crystallised it all into one phrase so daring, so fresh, so magnificent. The one attribute possessed by the citizens of God's kingdom is simple enough - they possess the childlike heart and spirit.

## THE PRINCIPLE

We must sound a warning because we must be very clear about what Jesus is saying. From experience we all know children who are spoiled brats, monsters that haunt you. Jesus is talking about the unspoiled child. To be **childlike** is one thing, to be **childish** is another. We are so careless in our speech and thought so we can easily confuse the two.

To be **CHILDLIKE** is to have the spirit of the child, to live in a wonderful world full of hopes, love, faith, joy, peace.

To be **CHILDISH** is to be immature, petulant, even selfish, spoilt, petty, jealous, unable to face things and the facts of life realistically.

Paul makes the point to the Corinthians *"In understanding I would have you to be men"* and goes on how he says *"put away childish things"* (1 Cor.13:11). **CHILDISH** faith does not expect Christians to undergo pain, disappointments, surely God should be making us happy, always answers our prayers the way we want. It is self centred and demanding.

**CHILDLIKE** faith sees God using pain and disappointment to shape our lives. Let us realise God is Sovereign - we are weak, we need His strength. Let us focus on God and trusts Him to work it all out