

Christian Education Sunday  
August 8, 2010  
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY  
Based on Psalm 78:1-8  
Pastor Paul Horn

**“We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD”**

This Thanksgiving it will be 10 years since one of my grandfathers died. A few months after his death, my dad presented me with grandpa’s coffee mug. It has the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary seal on it, where we both attended school to become pastors. It carries some sentimental value, but if it cracks or breaks, I won’t fuss too much. The reason I won’t get too upset about a broken coffee mug is that my grandfather passed down something of even more value to me. He was privileged to baptize all six of his children. He made sure they attended a Lutheran day school, and Lutheran high school. And when his 3<sup>rd</sup> oldest son became married and has his first child, he brought his son to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit on September 3, 1978 at Christ Lutheran Church in Beatrice, Nebraska. That little boy grew up listening to devotions at the dinner table, attending church on Sunday morning. And now that little boy is grown up, and he has been privileged to baptize all 5 of his children, and to read devotions with them every night before they go to bed and to bring them to church on Sunday.

My grandfather passed down a legacy, the Word of God. And what most left an impression on me is the attitude with which he and my parents had toward the Word of God. What inheritance or legacy are you planning on leaving your children? What impressions are you making on them in regards to their future of their faith in Christ Jesus?

Because as you know, children are like wet cement. Whoever or whatever puts pressure on them makes a lasting impression. The scary part is that impressions left on children can harden and become a permanent part of that child’s identity. What impressions are you leaving on your children or grandchildren, or the children at this congregation?

Mrs. Frost was a Sunday school teacher at a church in Woodridge, NJ, and one day she asked her class, “What’s wrong with grown ups?” Here were some of the complaints:

1. Grownups make promises, then they forget all about them, or else they say it wasn’t really a promise. It was just a maybe.
2. Grownups don’t do the things they’re always telling us children to do like picking up their things or always telling the truth.
3. Grownups never really listen to what children have to say, they decide ahead of time what they’re going to answer.
4. Grownups make mistakes but they often won’t admit them. They pretend that they weren’t mistakes at all or somebody else made them do it.
5. Grownups interrupt children all the time and think nothing of it. If a child interrupts a grownup, he gets a scolding or something worse.
6. Grownups are always talking about what they did and what they knew when they were 10 years old – but they never try to think what it’s like to be 10 years old right now.

As adults, we think we understand children because we all used to be children. But we have quickly forgotten what it was truly like to be a child. We think that children have it easier today, for example: a bus picks them in front of their home and drops them off at the school doors. We used to have to walk to school uphill both ways and in the snow!

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University reported that 30 years ago, the greatest fears of grade school children were 1) animals 2) being in a dark room, 3) high places, 4) strangers, 5) loud noises. Today, kids are afraid of the following: 1) divorce, 2) terrorists, 3) cancer, 4) pollution, 5) being mugged. Fears are different, challenges are different, expectations are different, but one thing remains the same, children are like wet cement, the good examples and the bad examples can equally leave a lasting impression.

In our lesson this morning from Ps78 the psalm writer Asaph instructs us, “[**The LORD**] **established a law which he commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children.**” As adults, the LORD has entrusted to us a great responsibility and privilege to make positive, lasting impressions on our children and the children of this congregation. Whether that child was baptized this morning or started their first day of high school last week, our LORD directs us to be spiritual influences on all of our youth. Think about this: we are only one generation away from losing the good news of Jesus in this congregation. The next generation of Christians depends on us!

Psalm 78 encourages us to pass on the truths of God’s Word. But it also stands as a warning against repeating the mistakes of the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness. What lasting impressions did they make on their children? They rebelled against the LORD by bowing down to a golden calf. They often grumbled and complained to the LORD and about their leaders, Moses and Aaron. They often chose not to listen to the promises of God. When the 12 spies returned from their mission to the Promised Land and 10 of those men brought back a negative report complaining, “The people are too strong, their cities are too well fortified, we can’t beat them in battle!” The people refused to go! When all the while they had seen the powerful things the LORD had so graciously done for them, they ignored God’s acts of might. And they ended up dying in the wilderness over the next 40 years. And what did their children do? They watched and listened, and when they grew up, they did the very same actions, and had the same attitudes toward God and his Word and they fell away and God allowed enemy nations to come into their lands and oppress them.

What impressions are your actions leaving on the next generation? What are they learning when a twenty-dollar bill seems like such a large amount when you donate it to the Lord but such an insignificant amount when you go shopping? What are they learning when two hours seem so long when you’re at church on Sunday morning and you have to get out of here because you have things to do, but how short those same two hours seem when you’re watching a movie? What are they learning when you find it so difficult and boring to read one chapter of the Bible, and how easy it is to read 100 pages in a novel? What impression are you leaving when Sunday morning can so easily be replaced by “mommy has to work,” or “daddy has to sleep,” or you have soccer, baseball, horse riding practice, we can’t miss that! Your coach will get mad! But we don’t think twice about how God feels about our negligence of his Word in worship and Bible study? What impression are you leaving when our children get video game time or TV

time, and are sure to make all their sports team practices, but no effort is made to make family devotion time a priority?

What are we doing? Weren't not following God's good direction for us to **"tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done."** (vs4) We're doing the exact opposite, aren't we? Let us not compound our mistake and repeat Mrs. Frost's Sunday school class list of "What's wrong with grownups." *Grownups make mistakes, but they often won't admit them. They pretend that they weren't mistakes at all or somebody else made them do it.*"

Let's model to the next generation right now how Christians respond when we realize we've made a mistake, it's more than a mistake though, isn't it, it's a sin against our God. Adults, please repeat after me, "Lord Jesus, I have sinned against you." "Lord Jesus, I have not always modeled a Christ-like attitude toward your holy Word." "Lord Jesus, in your mercy, please forgive me."

*By the perfect life and innocent death of your Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child.* Those words are familiar, aren't they? And they're comforting. As adults, we need to hear those words when we know that we have sinned. We too need to listen to what the fathers and mothers of the church have taught us. Our parents taught us about the perfect life and innocent death our Lord Jesus Christ. They taught us the story of Mary and Martha, when Jesus said that Mary has chosen the one thing needful: to sit at his feet, and listen attentively to God's Word. But he just didn't say that the Word of God was important, he lived it. The Gospel writers tell us that Jesus made it his habit to enter the synagogue on the Sabbath day. And Jesus didn't just live it, it was his attitude toward the Word of God that was also perfect. The study of his Father's Word was his one true treasure and his highest priority. Where we have fallen far short, Jesus was perfect. Thank God for Christian parents who brought you to the font, to have you baptized, where you were covered with Jesus' righteous life, more precious than the diamond ring given to you by your grandmother. Thank God for parents who faithfully drove you to catechism class. Thank God for the pastor who taught you about Jesus' love for you, and who now administers Christ's body and blood so that you can be reassured that it was he who was punished in your place. A precious treasure indeed has been passed down to us! As adults we know that we need to keep coming back to hear, "Your sins are forgiven! Your guilt is covered! Heaven is yours! You have been baptized! You are a child of God!"

Yes, these words of our liturgy are a priceless heirloom that has been passed down for generations, **"You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will! In peace of forgiveness let us praise the Lord!"** How will you live according to his will? How will you praise the Lord for the peace that his forgiveness brings?

**"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power and the wonders he has done."** (vs4) Parents, how will this look in your home? If you don't already have family devotion time established, it will start tonight. This devotional booklet provided by the stewardship committee (which is in your church mailbox) will be a great way to start leaving an impression on your children. Start tonight after dinner or before bedtime. Make a family plan to read and discuss one section every day the next few weeks. After you've finished the

devotion booklet, let your children plan your next devotion study; maybe it's reading one chapter out of Genesis or one of the Gospels every day so your family can learn and relearn the great Bible history stories. This is how adults will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD.

How will we as adults in this congregation leave a positive impression on our children? We will demonstrate a positive attitude toward worship and Bible Study and Sunday school. We will make these a priority in our busy schedules. We will give our children the opportunity to see how valuable the treasure of the Gospel is by showing them that it is important to us, too.

How will we as adults impress upon our children that the gospel is a precious treasure, **“so that they will put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but keep his commands?”**

As an adult, you know that the children of this congregation will experience hardships in their lives, just as you did. Won't it be nice to know that when these children are grown and on their own, and times are rough, they will put their trust in God and his promises, because they watched you when life was miserable. And they saw you falling on your knees in prayer, instead of despairing of life, they watched you run to God and listen to the great promises in his Word. Won't it be nice to know that when these children are grown and when they feel the guilt of their mistakes weighing on their hearts, they will fall at the throne of heaven and seek God's mercy and look to the cross and be relieved that their sins have been forgiven, because they watched you do the same?

What an inheritance to leave behind for your children! How about this for an impression: when your child is grown, and has children of their own, they will call you on the phone inviting you to your grandchild's baptism. When you receive an anniversary card in the mail the hand-written note says, “Mom and dad, thank you for bringing me to the font, for making worship a priority when I was young, for teaching me to sing “Children of the heavenly Father,” and for pointing me to the cross.” I pray that God grants each and every one of us the wisdom to leave behind the lasting legacy of the Gospel for our children. Amen.