**July 16, 2023 Colossians 4:1-6**

***Dedicated***

**Scripture:**

Colossians 4:1-6 NIrV (1)

*Masters, give your slaves what is right and fair. Do it because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. (2) Spend a lot of time in prayer. Always be watchful and thankful. (3) Pray for us too. Pray that God will open a door for our message. Then we can preach the mystery of Christ. Because I preached it, I am being held by chains. (4) Pray that I will preach it clearly, as I should. (5) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity. (6) Let the words you speak always be full of grace. Season them with salt. Then you will know how to answer everyone.*

Proverbs 22:6

*“Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.”*

Ephesians 6:1-4

*“(1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (2) ‘Honor your father and mother’”--this is the first commandment with a promise: “(3) ‘so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ (4) And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

Proverbs 13:24

*“Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.”*

**Notes:**

1. Paul instructs us to be an ***example***, others want to be like.
   1. Are children born into this world fully capable of surviving on their own?
      1. Absolutely not,
   2. Other than instinct, can you say that children are born without any knowledge concerning good or evil?
      1. Yes.
   3. Do children have to learn how to do everything, that will help them to survive physically, emotionally, and spiritually?
      1. Yes,
   4. Who bears the responsibility to train and teach children these things, how to live and survive?
      1. Parents,
   5. How do Children learn?
      1. they are taking in all that they see.
   6. The ***church***, must stand next to all of these parents.

“*(5) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity.*”

* 1. Be ***wise*** so our example is without fault.
  2. Make the most of opportunities to be a good ***example***.

1. It mentions being ***wise***, but what does that mean?
   1. To act with the same wisdom as Jesus;
   2. “*walk in christ or act* ***christlike****; play* ***christlike****; do business* ***christlike****; treat others* ***christlike****; carry yourself* ***christlike****; live* ***christlike***.”

“*(6) Let the words you speak always be full of grace. Season them with salt. Then you will know how to answer everyone.*”

* 1. Our ***example*** should be in the teachings of Christ.
  2. Be a good example, be like ***Christ***.

1. We are each called to be the ***example*** that Christ intended.
   1. If you fail to walk the walk, then your example is ***corrupt*** and ***faulty***;
   2. Hold them ***accountable***, set the example
   3. Hold each other ***accountable*** as well.
   4. Show them in ***love*** and they will be more receptive to your instruction.
2. You have pledged to stay ***faithful***, walk in wisdom.
   1. It can be done with ***dedication*** and a firm commitment.
   2. Be Christlike in every ***opportunity*** that we have.
   3. Check ***yourself***, against God’s holy word.

**Script:**

As I prepared for this day, I made every attempt for everything to go smoothly. I even asked Penny to make sure that each child’s name was spelled correctly. One thing that I have learned over the years is that you can never give too much attention to detail, and the older I get the more aware of details I try to be. Even though I fail at times.

On a Sunday when we dedicate children, we expect to hear verses like Proverbs 22:6 “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” Or how about Ephesians 6:1-4 “(1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (2) ‘Honor your father and mother’”--this is the first commandment with a promise: “(3) ‘so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ (4) And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” And how about Proverbs 13:24 “Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.” We find many passages speaking directly to parents or children.

But this week as I prepared, I found a passage that has new meaning to me; even though it is not as common as those I just mentioned. However it has great implications to how we as parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other friends and family of the church are able to be the example to teach our children how to be good Godly individuals. It speaks directly to our behavior. But today I am going to read from the New International Reader's Version, so that the instructions are clear. Stand with me as we share in the reading of Colossians 4:1-6.

*(1) Masters, give your slaves what is right and fair. Do it because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. (2) Spend a lot of time in prayer. Always be watchful and thankful. (3) Pray for us too. Pray that God will open a door for our message. Then we can preach the mystery of Christ. Because I preached it, I am being held by chains. (4) Pray that I will preach it clearly, as I should. (5) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity. (6) Let the words you speak always be full of grace. Season them with salt. Then you will know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:1-6 NIrV*

Paul is speaking to the believers in Colossae and he is not specifically speaking to parents or children. But the words Paul speaks instruct us to be the kind of example that others would want to be like. People who others will try to emulate. We all have somebody in our lives that we look to as an example of how to act. For me it is a combination of many people; but my father is first and foremost.

With this in mind I have a short quiz for us to share: Are children born into this world fully capable of surviving on their own? Absolutely not, if we took a newborn and placed them in the streets they would not survive very long. Other than instinct, can you say that children are born without any knowledge concerning good or evil? Yes, newborns do not know the difference between good and evil. Do children have to learn how to do everything that will help them to survive physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Yes, newborns have no knowledge of how to physically, emotionally and spiritually survive. Who bears the responsibility to train and teach children these things, how to live and survive? Parents bear the lion’s share of the responsibility. How do Children learn? One of the first things we notice about a child as a newborn is how alert they are. When their eyes are open, they are not fixed on one particular item, but they are scanning the area taking in all that they see.

Whether you realize this or not, they are alert for the rest of their lives. They are always watching and learning. They make judgements on what they see and whether they find it beneficial or not. And it makes me wonder how many of us here today, have just stopped learning. Is there any one of us here today that has learned all that there is to know? Now think about what your attitudes, and what your actions say about you and how this is influencing and teaching our children? They learn by watching; then by imitating those who mean the most to them. Yes, parents in many ways are at the top of the list, grandparents are there as well. I only need to spend a few minutes with my grandchildren before I notice little things Little things that I do that they begin to do as well. Faces I make; habits I have; phrases I say; they take these things in and they reflect them in their own special way.

SO what does this mean, what am I supposed to take from this. Well, listen up church, don’t stand in judgment of these parents because you, the church, must stand there right next to each and all of these parents. These children learn by watching and imitating you as well. I remember teaching many different ages of children in my career, and I can always get a pretty good indication of how the people around a child act by the way the child acts.

A child’s attitude and actions in regard to the church are a direct reflection of the people connecting the child to the church. If they see you acting all prim and proper in church and then standing around at home using inappropriate language they will do the same thing. Because if Pap can do it so can I. If they only see you in church once a month, then they come to the conclusion that we only need to come to church once a month to fulfill our Christian duty. And what about the use of alcohol, tobacco products, and illegal drugs. If they see you using these things, they will also feel that it is okay for them to use. What the children see and accept is what they will do.

But look what it says in verse 5, “*(5) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity.*” We are told to be wise in the way we act so that our example is without fault. We are told to make the most of every opportunity to be a good example to all people; but especially to those who are still learning what is right and what is not. This passage is talking about our conduct. How we act, play, and do business. How we treat others: how we carry ourselves; ultimately, how we live. It mentions being wise, but what does that mean? I believe that it means to act with the same wisdom as Jesus; “*in Christ*” or “*Christlike*.” This verse could read, “*walk in Christ or act Christlike; play Christlike; do business Christlike; treat others Christlike; carry yourself Christlike; live Christlike*.”

It goes on in verse 6, “*(6) Let the words you speak always be full of grace. Season them with salt. Then you will know how to answer everyone.*” Paul is telling us that our example should be in the image and teachings of Christ. Let our words be a reflection of what we have learned from being in a relationship with Christ. When he says to season them with salt we go back to the sermon on the mount where Jesus calls us the salt of the earth. Salt is good for many things, it improves the flavor of food, preserves food, and acts in medicinal ways. So it only makes sense to season our words and actions with salt to improve their quality.

Ultimately Paul is encouraging us to be a good example in our words and actions, to be like Christ. We are each called to be the Christian example that Christ intended you to be. Parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, Christians; children learn by imitating what they see and hear; if you talk the talk, then you must walk the walk. If you fail to walk the walk that you talk, then your example is corrupt and faulty; be Christlike in everything you do and say.

That is what this dedication service is really about. It is about these parents, coming this morning before God and his church to commit themselves to being dedicated Christian examples for their children. But it doesn’t stop there. You the church are their witness, you the church are to hold them accountable, you the church must also set the example, a Christian example, and you must hold each other accountable as well. And you don’t hold them accountable by constantly criticizing the way they do things. You must explain with love what they can do to improve their example. All ridicule ever does is drive people away and create a wedge in the midst of relationships. Show them in love and they will be more receptive to your instruction

Each of you here this morning have made a pledge; you have pledged to stay faithful to God, to walk in wisdom, to be Christlike, and if you are faithful, you will succeed in the task that God has set before you. But it takes real commitment. Not just an outward symbol as this service is, but an inward commitment. This commitment may require you to change your heart, and maybe even to put some of your ways and actions behind you so that you may be the example you need to be. It takes a lot of hard work, it takes a lot of prayer, it will take courage and strength, and patience. But it can be done with true dedication and a firm commitment. Are you dedicated to this task?

Parents, live what you believe. If you believe Christ answers prayer, then be an example, give him something to answer. Pray without ceasing. If you believe Christ will take care of you—then rely on him instead of self. If you believe God’s word gives Christian’s direction—read it instead of the latest how to books by Dr. Spock. If you believe that Sunday school is an important part of the church and good for your kids—then be here to support it yourself. If you believe that church attendance is what a Christian should do—then be here on Sunday and Wednesday to be fed by God’s word. If you believe that Christians should obey the law—then slow down and stop speeding. If you believe that bad mouthing someone is wrong—then bless the one that cut you off in traffic. If someone has offended you—forgive them and move on. Your children and others are watching you, always watching you to be exact. Walk in wisdom.

So we have in this passage a statement as to what to do. We are to be Christlike. But there is a second part, and that is telling us when to do this. We are to be Christlike in every opportunity that we have. Parents—use every opportunity to be the dedicated Christ follower and example for your kids—because you know something? I have said it many times, we Christians are the only bible that some people will ever see. And until your children are old enough to read the scriptures and understand them for themselves, you are your child’s bible. Are you the genuine article? Or are you a version that omitted doctrines and statutes that make Christianity what you want it to be, and not what God intended it to be?

Check all your morals and every step you make, against God’s holy word. The bible is a Christian’s Road map, and until your child accepts Christ as Lord and Savior, you must be the guide. Every Christian in this church—is someone’s guide. Whether you know it or not, people—children, are watching you. Walk in wisdom—so you don’t send them down the path of destruction. Be a roadblock on the road to hell with your Christlike example. Use every opportunity to spread the love of Jesus through your life. Be Christlike toward them that are without Christ, using every opportunity that you have available.