

Happy Meal Gospel

This Sunday, there is currently

Its been a while since I've last had the opportunity to preach in front of the children here.. And I count it a great privilege... Jesus Himself invited children into His arms.. and taught that to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must become like them!

SO. it is with no small burden that I have been preparing this message... And I pray that God will use it to speak to the children.. and the parents, as well as everyone else in this room.

Back in 1999, my parents left there VERY stable jobs in Korea...and came to Vancouver with me and my little sister. They had sold everything... condo.. car... furniture and gave most of their money away... bringing with them only 2500 dollars and two carry on luggages for the four of us. Thats right... \$2500... And we didn't know ANYONE here at that time... And I remember... growing up...on special occasions.. my parents would take us out to Mcdonald's. I have very fond memories of McDonald's. In fact, I proposed to my girlfriend at McDonald's... Not to far from here.. ANYWAYS... REALLY fond memories of McDonalds... And the playground was a draw for sure, but what really got me was the happy meal..! Soggy fries... a tiny chicken burger.. and a cup of orange juice..And the TOY! Right? We all have memories of playing with our toys from Mcdonald's ...

Even to this day... when you take children out for Mcdonald's and buy them a happy meal, their face lights up!

And the brilliance behind the Happy Meal... comes not only from its promise of a toy, but of HAPPINESS. The mere thought of a Happy Meal ought to light up a child's face. Parents aren't just purchasing soggy fries and greasy chicken burgers. They are purchasing an experience that will make their children happy!

That's the way Mcdonald's has packaged the happy meal. They spent millions of dollars marketing and branding the happy meal so that it gets the kind of reaction it does.

Now, why am I taking the time to tell you about my childhood memories of McDonalds?

Because, a lot of the times, we package the gospel in a way that makes God out to be a place we go to ORDER a Happy Meal.

For example. We teach our children pray to God when we need something. The only problem with that is God doesn't exist to respond to our felt needs. To be sure, the BIBLE teaches us to bring EVERY need before God in prayer. Give us this day our DAILY BREAD. But it also teaches that the prerogative of prayer is God's GLORY! The Lord's prayer begins with these words - Our Father in HEAVEN, Hallowed be THY name, THY Kingdom come, THY will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!

Is that what we are modelling for our children? In the home, when you say grace. When you pray for them, what are you praying for? Does your prayer reflect your desire for your life and your children's life to display the glory of God. Or does it reflect your desire for them to grow up well, be a straight A student, and meet a nice spouse?

Today, we are going to expose the lie that turns God into a McDonald's by looking at how God IS our HAPPY MEAL.

I'll say that again. God IS our HAPPY MEAL. We don't COME to Him to get our fix of whatever will make us happy. HE IS OUR HAPPINESS.

In fact, if you remember last week, we looked at the story of Gideon and the judges. HOW RIGHT after Moses and JOSHUA died, the entire nation began to do what was right in their own eyes... HOW CAN THAT BE? WHAT HAPPENED? THIS HAPPENED. GOD WASN'T THEIR HAPPINESS! The parents didn't model to their children what it meant for GOD to BE THEIR HAPPINESS! They BEGAN to USE GOD and only go to Him to get the things THEY WANTED. AND THE CHILDREN GREW UP WATCHING THEIR PARENTS LIVE AND PRAY LIKE THAT. And so. Naturally... they began turning to other gods... LIKE BAAL. OR MONEY or SEX. Because Well. THEY DON'T COME WITH ALL THESE LAWS! They FEED upon your NATURAL SINFUL DESIRES... And they give instant gratification. But we know from experience and from the many stories of the Bible how ENSLAVING IT ALL IS.

SO if you have brought your Bibles with you, would you turn with me now to Exodus 19:4. And we are going to SEE how GOD IS OUR HAPPY MEAL.

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. I BROUGHT YOU - TO MYSELF.

What is going on here?

Well, Israel is gathered around Mount Sinai and the people are entering into a COVENANT with GOD. If you remember, God had just rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.. Even if you have never read the Bible, you probably have heard the stories - of the 10 PLAGUES...right? How God sent 10 MIGHTY plagues all across Egypt in order to convince Pharaoh to LET HIS PEOPLE GO! AND in the end, how God even split the RED SEA in half so that His people could walk across..

And we have to wonder... why did God go to such great lengths to do that for Israel? I mean, surely He knew how they would turn out? We were in the book of Judges last week and we SAW - didn't we- how STUBBORN and REBELLIOUS they were. Surely GOD KNEW! And yet, He saves them. WHY?

TO honour the promise that He made with Abraham. You see. God had made a PROMISE to Abraham and His descendants. That eventually, they would no longer have to be a NOMADIC tribe travelling from one place to another... and that they would have a LAND to call their own. THIS was called the PROMISED LAND. And so- TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE - GOD rescues the Israelites from the clutches of the strongest empire at that time, and He is leading them TOWARDS the Promised Land.

But on the way there. They make a stop at Mount Sinai.. Where God REVEALS HIMSELF to the Israelites. Now, we know this as the mountain where Moses went up to receive the 10 commandments! Thou shall not murder. Thou shall not lie. Thou shall honour your father and mother.. As well as a WHOLE bunch of other laws.

Have you ever wondered why God didn't just leave Israel alone after He saved them from Egypt? Why did He have to give them the LAW? Couldn't

He just have let them BE FREE! Instead He gave them THIS IMPOSSIBLE SET OF LAWS TO KEEP. NO WONDER THEY BEGAN DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT IN THEIR OWN EYES AND CHASING AFTER OTHER GODS! To outsiders, it would seem as if they were freed from slavery from Egypt just to enter into another SLAVE/master relationship with GOD! WHY?

One of the main reasons God gave the LAW was to reveal HIMSELF. NOT TO ENSLAVE US. BUT TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US.

You see, the GOAL of SALVATION - BOTH BACK THEN AND NOW - IS NOT JUST FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION... its not just freedom FROM sin or hell... we are freed TOWARDS something...or SOMEONE and that someONE is GOD!

Exodus 19:4 makes this clear - you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

AHA! There it is! TO MYSELF! God SAVES US TOWARDS HIMSELF. Not the PROMISED LAND. BUT TOWARDS HIMSELF! God IS OUR HAPPY MEAL! NOT A PLOT OF LAND! NOT A FAT BANK ACCOUNT. GOD IS OUR INHERITANCE! The Israelites never really did get this...

He doesn't JUST SAVE US... He WANTS to be in RELATIONSHIP with US..

And in order to be in relationship with someone, you need to KNOW what kind of Person He is... Up until this point, God had been an abstract concept floating around in the heavens... The Israelites didn't really know who GOD was..only that well, that He was really STRONG!

BUT NOW, God was going to REVEAL HIMSELF ... HERE'S WHAT KIND OF GOD I AM.

That's what the 10Commandments show us. Most of us have only ever thought about the 10 commandments as WHAT WE MUST DO... But have you ever thought about this way.... In giving the 10 commandments, God is showing what kind of GOD HE IS...

The first commandment commands that we worship no other god but GOD ALONE... and from it, we see that God is a JEALOUS GOD who upholds HIS GLORY. BUT also, we see a God who cares DEEPLY for His people...

DON'T WORSHIP ANY OTHER so-called God because they're ALL FAKE. I am the ONLY true GOD and I will not let you - my covenant PARTNER, WASTE your LIFE WORSHIPPING A LIE!

The commandments to honour your father and mother and NOT commit adultery show us that GOD honours FAMILY and MARRIAGE. On the other hand... He hates lying.. He hates stealing... who hates murder... In other words, God IS justice.

And moving on from the 10 commandments to the other laws, he see that God cares for the sick and the orphans.. He is compassionate towards the poor and He UPHOLDS LOVE.

The Law serves to reveal the GOODNESS and JUSTICE and HOLINESS and KINDNESS of the Lord...

But it also serves to reveal to us OUR SIN. The law reveals to us how GOOD and PERFECT GOD IS. And at the same time, it also reveals to us just how UNWORTHY we are to be in relationship with Him.

Romans 3:20

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

the LAW BRINGS TO LIGHT our SIN!... You know what. I'm not even going to get super-spiritual here. We KNOW, don't we. That we are BROKEN INSIDE. I mean, if you could just see what is going on in my mind and my heart.. You know that I wouldn't be standing in front of you... And IF the person sitting next to you... Could see into your heart and every evil thought that you had... YOU KNOW that you would cringe back in disgust.

HOW MUCH MORE SO WITH A HOLY PERFECT GOD? To WHOM ETERNITY is HIS RESIDENTIAL and to WHOM DWELLS IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT? He CANNOT TOLERATE to be in the presence of SIN and EVIL. IN FACT. HE HATES IT! Remember - God is a JUST GOD. And HE CANNOT just pretend as if you have never sinned. HE MUST PUNISH IT! And yet. He also wants to be there for us.

So what does God do? God sends His Son. Jesus Christ. To die on the cross for our sins. He takes on the reproach and shame and disgust WE DESERVE and in return, we get GLORY HONOUR AND PRAISE. But MORE THAN THAT - WE GET GOD! We, the Bible says - are PARTAKERS in the DIVINE NATURE. We get to spend ETERNITY with SOMEONE WHO IS BIG ENOUGH TO SATISFY THE all the various cravings of our SOUL FOREVER!

That's the GOSPEL. GOD IS OUR HAPPY MEAL. GOD IS THE GOOD that makes the GOSPEL GOOD NEWS. He isn't just the one we go to for our HAPPY MEALS - HE IS OUR HAPPINESS - He is our JOY. HE IS OUR PEACE.

THEREFORE - some quick pieces of application and then we are done. THEREFORE, in light of all that. How then should we pray? Or more specifically, how should we TEACH OUR children to pray? How are we going to PRAY FOR THEM? At the table. At the bedside.

1. We must not model for them the kind of prayer that begins and ends with you asking God to give them good things and watch over them. That's included. But the focus of OUR PRAYER OUGHT TO BE SO GODWARD and SO God-CENTRED that EVEN CHILDREN KNOW without a doubt that GOD IS OUR HAPPY MEAL. THAT GOD IS OUR TREASURE.
2. We must model for them a lifestyle that finds its HOPE and JOY in God. You show them that your HOPE is SOMEWHERE ELSE. NOT OF THIS WORLD. That you aren't saving up to have the SAME TOYS or the SAME BAGS that the WORLD WANTS. WHY? Because WE HAVE GOD! THROUGH CHRIST, WE GET GOD! And therefore, we don't NEED even the blessings of this LIFE. We pray for it. And we receive it with gratitude when it comes.. BUT WE WON'T NAG GOD FOR IT EVERYDAY. We don't NEED TO APPROACH THE TILL AND GIVE GOD our ORDER FOR more and more and more BLESSING! PLEASE don't DUMB down prayer like that for the children... WE ALREADY HAVE THE CAKE. And everything else is just the cherry on top. So we don't NEED it. Remember, life does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions. Or in your health. Or in your children's GRADES. Life consists IN KNOWING GOD and WHAT HE has ALREADY DONE FOR YOU IN CHRIST.

Lets pray.