



"It's not the will to win that matters—everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters."
—Paul "Bear" Bryant

07-Nov-25

Turning the Fathers' Hearts to the Children (Part Two)

Jesus Christ's teaching in [Matthew 11:16-19](#) expresses a deep emotional appeal, centered around a cry from the children for an audience:

But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying:

We played the flute for you,
And you did not dance;
We mourned to you,
And you did not lament.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" But [wisdom](#) is justified by her children.

Many commentators suggest Jesus made this parable up, but it reflects [Ecclesiastes 3:4](#):

A time to weep,
And a time to laugh;
A time to mourn,
And a time to dance . . .

Aesop, the ancient Greek storyteller, lived in the sixth century BC at the same time as the fall of Judah. One of his fables reads as follows:

A fisherman tries to catch fish by playing his flute, expecting them to be charmed by the music and leap into his net. The fish, however, remain unresponsive, ignoring the flute's tune. Frustrated, the fisherman abandons the flute, picks up his net, and casts it into the water, successfully catching the fish. He then scolds them, saying they should have danced when he played the music, but now it is too late.

What does Jesus' poem about the children suggest?

"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance": In ancient Jewish tradition, the flute was played at weddings, so the children playing in the marketplace seem to be imitating weddings they have attended. But they are being ignored. Similarly, [this world](#) ignores the metaphor of the [Kingdom of God](#) as a wedding feast ([Matthew 22:1-14](#)).

"We mourned for you, and you did not lament": The children in the marketplace are imitating funeral dirges, but their busy "companions" ignore them. In parallel, [God](#) warns His people not to ignore the signs of impending disaster around them, urging them to hear and understand, to see and perceive ([Isaiah 6:9-10](#)). Worse, Isaiah tells them that they are too late!

In His commentary on the poem, Jesus scolds that generation and, by implication, the modern world, when He chides them for ignoring John the Baptist's call to [repent](#), and then for failing to celebrate the Son of God who is among them. He tells them that they are frustratingly unresponsive to God's activity among them, just as the [Laodiceans](#), who are neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:15), remain uncommitted, or as the "cows of Bashan," who crush the needy while calling for bowls of wine ([Amos 4:1](#)), are too committed to the wrong things.

Most children experience a warm and loving relationship with their parents. Likewise, a true Christian should experience a warm, loving relationship with God. In this way, we should be like little children. When we see young mothers and fathers gently and firmly loving their offspring, it should remind us of the profound look into the heart of Christ found in [Matthew 23:37-39](#):

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*"

While declaring His love, Jesus laments the necessity of His own death in Jerusalem, the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and even "the time of Jacob's Trouble" because of their sins. Much like the repeated "Martha, Martha" in [Luke 10:41](#), the repeated cry of "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" expresses His personal anguish for His people's many misunderstandings and misguided choices.

[God's love](#) for us has always been there, as ours should be for little children. *The New Living Translation* of [Hosea 11:1](#) brings this out:

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
And I called [M]y son out of Egypt.
But the more I called to him,
The farther he moved from [M]e,
Offering sacrifices to the images of Baal
And burning incense to idols.
I myself taught Israel how to walk,
Leading him along by the hand.
But he doesn't know or even care
That it was I who took care of him.
I led Israel along
With [M]y ropes of [kindness](#) and love.
I lifted the yoke from his neck,
And I [M]yself stooped to feed him.

God has always desired a loving, personal relationship with his children. We should, too.

Malachi quotes the Lord of Hosts in the last two verses of the [Old Testament](#):

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. ([Malachi 4:5-6](#))

In this prophecy, written between 450 and 430 BC, the Lord of Hosts promises to send "Elijah the prophet." In [Matthew 11:13-15](#), Jesus confirms that this prophecy is about John the Baptist, the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

In [Luke 1:16](#), the angel Gabriel gives glad tidings to Zacharias about his coming son, John:

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. ([Luke 1:16-17](#))

In short, restoration of familial relationships is highlighted as a critical component needed to avert the coming divine judgment.

There is some good news closer to home: NBC News Decision Desk recently conducted a now widely quoted and respected poll of 2,970 people in Generation Z, those aged 18 to 29. It highlights differences in views on politics, success, marriage, and children within this demographic. One particular finding is significant: "A large group of Gen Z men ranked having children as the top factor in defining personal success."

That is a startling change of direction for American men!

Now, I am not ignorant. I have three children and seven grandchildren, so I realize they can be little scamps and need discipline. At their age, they are manipulating and wheedling, playing games, learning how to dress themselves and clean up, and beginning to receive an education. But are they not imitating what they see in the home? In [Matthew 18:1-5](#), Jesus clearly states that He wants us to seek the best lessons from them. We can glean a lot from those joyous times when everyone is rested, well-fed, and happy—when children are at their best—and they will learn from us as well.

In the church, children walk under the almost complete guidance of their parents, but all of us influence them to some degree. More importantly, they are strongly influenced by God to the extent that their parents are responsive to Him. For the sake of the future of our families and God's Family, we should all be praying for those parents and setting good examples!

At the same time, as our Savior counsels, we should be like little children at their best!

- James C. Stoertz

Church News & Special Announcements

Derek and Tiffany Schulte of Winterset, Iowa, are excited to announce the birth of **Zuriel Jeanne Schulte**. She arrived on November 3, 2025, weighing in at 6 lbs 11 oz and measuring 21 inches long. **Tiffany** writes, "We are extra pleased to have a new speed record with a 5 hour labor; the others averaged 26 hours, so this one was a lovely blessing. We are all enjoying the recovery period and are doing well."

05-Nov-25

New Transcripts

[1839A: Deuteronomy, Land Sabbaths, Atonement, and Third Tithe](#)

Given by Ryan McClure on 27-Sep-25

[1843: Simplifying Life \(Part Six\)](#)

Given by David F. Maas on 25-Oct-25

[645s: Spiritual Procrastination](#)

Given by Bill Onisick on 03-Jan-04

[BS-LA07: Lamentations \(Part Seven; 1989\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 27-Jun-89

[BS-LA08: Lamentations \(Part Eight; 1989\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 11-Jul-89

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Preparations For Christ's Return](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The preparatory work of preparing the way for Christ's first coming was comparatively low budget in comparison to the extravagance of Israel's leaders. It was more efficient, however, because God Almighty had coordinated the events. The preparation for Christ's second coming will be far more elaborate, a series of events which will turn humanity on its ear. Because of its intractability, the earth will require considerable softening up through earth-shaking events consisting of the seven trumpet plagues, symbolized by the Feast of Trumpets. Just as God is preparing vessels for mercy and destruction, God is also working to see that His people are prepared, clearing out any obstacles for us, saving the remnant that He has chosen. God is planning to finish the work, even cutting it short for the sake of the elect. God dots every I and crosses every "t." God has a process and blueprint, planning to make all of us look like Christ; He always finishes what He starts. Are we making our own preparations as co-workers with Him or are we the clay questioning the Potter? We must refrain from murmuring or complaining as we work out our salvation, continuing to build character when no one is looking, being totally harmless and without blame,

radiating moral purity. Our looking for the appearing of our Lord is not a static activity, but consists of getting rid of sin, and replacing it with righteousness, integrity, and self control, with great reverence for God. O

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Elijah and John the Baptist](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Despite the greatness of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus declares that none was greater than His cousin, John, known as "the Baptist." John Ritenbaugh explains that Jesus clearly says that John fulfilled Malachi 4:5-6 as the prophesied Elijah to come.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 07-Nov-25) will be **Lamentations (Part Seven; 1989)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday (EST)** and all day Saturday.

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