

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION WEEKEND
IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL
PLAINVIEW, MN.

5 PM Sat. Sept. 13, 10 AM Sun. Sept. 14 2009

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MESSAGE

Bending the Rules which Jesus Straightens Out!

Intro. This week end we celebrate Christian Education at Immanuel Lutheran as Lutheran School has begun, Catechism instruction has begun, Adult and Youth Bible Classes have begun, Sunday School has begun and we install our teaching staff, commissioned and auxiliary. Why do we do all of this? Because we've always done it this way? Because that's our tradition? No, of course not. We celebrate and invest so much time and energy and money here at Immanuel Lutheran because God's Word moves us to do so. And one of the clearest, most basic reasons for Christian Education is Jesus' words of Mark 10, our Gospel lesson for today. Verses used at our services of infant Baptism, but the flipside of Baptism's coin is Christian Education: **'Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God'** And that is what I want to talk to you about a little bit today, with my message entitled:

BENDING THE RULES WHICH ONLY JESUS' CAN STRAIGHTEN OUT!

I. (Law) Why do teachers supervise recess? You'll see them here at Immanuel even on cold winter days standing and watching Jesus' boys and girls playing on the playground. Why? Well, to intervene whenever the rules of the playground are bent, so feelings and emotions and bodies are protected and injury and damage are prevented or at least minimized and admonition and comfort applied.

We human beings, whether we are boys and girls on a playground or big boys and girls getting married, we all want to bend the rules and all of us need supervision and protection – even salvation from our Master Teacher, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Who as our epistle lesson, **Heb. 2 tells us 'for a little while was made lower than the angels = made human ... crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death'**. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. Before we can appreciate what Jesus has done for us, before we are moved to place such a high price on Christian Education= the teaching of God's Word, the means by which Jesus takes up our children and ourselves into His cross extended and crucified arms

and lays His nail pierced hands upon us and blesses us with His grace and mercy and love and forgiveness.

We need first to see our sinfulness of bending the rules.

The context of our Christian Education text of Mark 10 is actually the issue of bending the rules of marriage and divorce. But it's not speaking of only the legal court granted divorce of husband and wife but it's also confronting our bending the rules which leads to the divorce of our children from Jesus by neglecting their Christian Education, a spiritual adultery that can take our children to hell, an eternal divorce from God. Christian Education is a very urgent issue to our Lord and His Church.

The Pharisees, those super zealous 'follow all the rules' guys, at least all their rules. These Pharisees were ganging up on Jesus we're told, **'in order to test Jesus'**. These Pharisees wanted to trap Jesus into saying something they could use against Him. The question of divorce was made to order for these guys, to do the trick of tripping up Jesus. The Pharisees themselves, you see, were divided on this subject. That's what happens when your opinion trumps the Word of God. Those who followed Rabbi Shammai said the only reason for divorce was moral indecency. Those who followed Rabbi Hillel said anything in a wife which offended a husband was grounds for a divorce. So these Pharisees united in their hatred of Jesus expected Jesus to side with one or the other and then pounce on His answer.

But, Jesus met their challenge. As Jesus always will as the Master Teacher 'the Word of God made flesh' (John 1). God's Word = Jesus will always trump human reason and goes directly to the source, God Himself. Jesus cuts across all human loop holes and 'whatifs' and Jesus appeals to the law of God's creation, the natural law of God, the divine law of marriage 'one man and one woman for a life time'. Divorce, you see, is sin. No matter how you want to weasel out of it or bend the rules. We are appalled these days at the homosexual immorality approved in our society even within the church, but heterosexual immorality is appalling, also. **Malachi 2 'I hate divorce' says the Lord'**, is pretty straight and to the point. And there is no such thing as no fault divorce, the fault of divorce is human sin which is in the heart of everyone of us. And all sin separates us from God, as our epistle lesson **Hebrew 2 says 'we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution'**. Human sin bears consequences, sin of divorce leads to the death of relationships. And all sin leads to the eternal death of body and soul, the

eternal death of our relationship with our God, that's the divorce we should all be aware of and not bend the rules to deny.

Which brings me to the context of our Gospel lesson, the spiritual danger of divorcing our children from Jesus. Notice **'pay close attention to what we have heard'**, Jesus' indignation which is a very strong word of anger = righteous wrath, is not aimed at the Pharisees looking for a loop hole in bending the rules for marriage and divorce. **'Pay close attention to what we have heard'**, Jesus' indignation His anger, His righteous wrath, is directed at His own disciples who wanted to divorce/divide the little children from coming to Jesus, which is spiritual adultery. It is a very serious responsibility God has given to us as families and as a church family, Immanuel Lutheran, Plainview not to prevent our boys and girls from coming to Lutheran School, Sunday School, Catechism. As we read in our introit, Ps. 127: **'Behold, children are a heritage = a gift from the Lord'**. And to prevent or to neglect or hinder our children or grandchildren or the children of our congregation and community from coming to Christian Education is damnable. Just as is divorce, just as is adultery, just as is our whole human nature which is constantly looking for loop holes and wanting to bend the rules for ourselves. God's Word is filled with the picture of marriage divorce and adultery illustrating spiritual divorce and adultery.

Hosea 1 'This people is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord'.

Jeremiah 3 'I have given My people a certificate of divorce, she has committed adultery with idols'

Ezekiel 6 'I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts which have become divorced from Me'.

To neglect Christian Education is to commit spiritual adultery, to divorce ourselves from God's Kingdom.

II. (Gospel) BUT, just as Jesus cuts across all the Pharisees' loop holes and whatifs when it comes to marriage and divorce. Jesus does the same thing when it comes to Christian Education, our bringing and coming with our children and grandchildren to Jesus 'through faith' and faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10). Jesus is appealing to our need and our children's need for the blessing of His outstretched arms on that cross as our Substitute and His nail pierced hands upon our children and upon ourselves for the forgiveness of all our sins; whatever they are = divorce of our marriages, adultery against our spouses which all married people are guilty of whether we hold a certificate of divorce or hold a marriage certificate. All of us have neglected, dishonored, disrespected, wunderlusted in our hearts and actions. Sin denies us, young and old, from receiving the Kingdom of God. Until we receive that Kingdom of

Grace 'like a little child', eager to learn God's Word His Law and Gospel. Jesus has cut through it all and as our epistle lesson **Heb. 2** says '**for a little while being made lower than the angels = God incarnate, God in flesh and blood, Immanuel = God with us ... tasted death for everyone**'. We and our children and our children's children desperately need Jesus Christ and His Word where Jesus takes us up in His cross extended crucified arms, puts His nail pierced hands upon us and blesses us with His grace and mercy and forgiveness of all our sins and welcomes us into God's Kingdom of grace. And that is what is received 'through faith' in Christian Education, in the preaching and teaching of God's Word, in the receiving of God's Sacraments.

Conclusion: Why, my people, look for loopholes, why, my people, bend the rules, why, my people make excuse. Why, my people, neglect Christian Education and bring Jesus indignation upon you and your children. While He is inviting you, calling you right here and now '**Let the children come to Me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God**'.

That is what we celebrate this Christian Education week end. And that is why we willingly invest so much time, money and energy here at Immanuel Lutheran, Plainview on Christian Education, simply because it is Jesus' Word. Amen