

Reflections With A Child

Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein"* (Mark 10:15). As I write these words I am in Pensacola, Florida, preparing to drive to Ft. Walton Beach to conduct a couple's retreat for The Campus Church. So, whenever Barbara and I have an opportunity to see our kids and grandkids, we "seize the day." The "carpe deum" is most important at this time because we recently found out that our youngest daughter, husband and their son will be moving to Cincinnati, Ohio. For Houstonian grandparents, this is equivalent to the dark side of the moon. We see them briefly at Thanksgiving, and then soon afterwards they move. So, you can see our temptation to be with them whenever we can for the next month.

This morning a grand memory for Grandpa was made. My grandson Aidan is just approaching one and a half years old, so he'll not remember what we experienced today. I had the blessing of being in his room when he first awoke. What a bright smile greeted me! The words of Jesus when He referred to Nathaniel came to mind, *"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"* (John 1:47). The word guile is *dolos* in Greek and it means: subtility, deceit, craft. In other words, here is a young man with no agenda or plans to deceive. I slept in a wee bit since we had stayed up so late with the kids the night before and I had not yet had my morning prayer. Therefore, Aidan accompanied Grandpa for an hour walk with God. What a joy! We walked through the partial ruins of the nearby forest where Hurricane Ivan had done his best to re-adjust this small portion of the planet he attacked. We picked up some fallen debris and examined a small snapped portion of a tree. We gazed deep into a shallow creek that now ran clear. We looked into the hole a small animal had dug for his home. We walked out of the forest into a clearing to see the fading moon in the azure blue sky. Then we ambled down a road and were greeted by a Dalmatian with a glorious bark, then on a little further to be welcomed by a Corgi with a snappy little bark, all to the amusement of Aidan. We traveled up a hill to see a man start a John Deere bulldozer to do some excavating. Around the corner we walked to an old car that bore the marks of years of long use. We peered into the windows wondering if it still ran.

All along our morning journey, we were praying. When we were in an area where no one but God would see us, I would lift up my hands in praise to God. Aidan mimicked my moves and that was rather cool. So many thoughts come to mind as we prayed together. Thoughts of his mom, seeing her little head on her little pillow in her little room, now all grown up and a mom at that. Thoughts of early morning prayer when his uncle would see me using the steps in our house as an altar and join me without saying a word. He would mumble a few words to Jesus, then lay his head on the blanket he had pulled off his bed and fall back to sleep while I finished prayer.

This morning I pointed to the creek and said, "Aidan, God made that water." I pointed to the moon and said, "Aidan, God made that moon." As one of the barking dogs captured our attention, I said, "And God made that puppy." It seemed as though I was telling the little guy things he didn't question. Frankly, he doesn't question anything since he doesn't have a vocabulary beyond eight words. But there are some wonderful things going on in my mind as we walked and prayed. First of all...

(1) What we do in our youth frames our definition of normal.

It's normal for a young man in Kenya to get up in the morning and go lion hunting. It's normal for a boy reared on a farm in Nebraska to get up and milk the cows. If prayer, attending church, and reading the Bible is promoted and done, this becomes the normal. *"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also"* (II Timothy 1:5). *"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you"* (Philippians 4:9).

(2) Life is full of memories; make the memories great ones.

I am convicted that we need to have lives that reflect greatness. Let me tell you some of my personal early memories. My dad lifted me on his shoulders when I was a toddler and I saw President Dwight David Eisenhower. I can hear the crowds and I can see his huge smile. I saw the general who planned and won D-Day and the president that set the course for America's boon.

In my teens I met and became friends with Dr. Robert G. Lee. I had a personal friendship with one of the most eloquent preachers in the history of the church.

When we moved to Houston, we took my parents for a picnic at the San Jacinto monument. Dad explained the Texas revolution and we re-enacted Santa Anna's unconditional surrender to General Sam Houston.

As I look back, I am glad as a family we did some memorable things together that brought some greatness into our lives. Let us be encouraged to read and study the lives of great people of the Bible such as Joseph, Ruth, John, and Paul. Read about the people in history that had destiny in their blood, the movers and shakers of society such as Theodore Roosevelt, Florence Nightingale, and Thomas Edison. Emulate and imitate as far as is reasonable. Live a life before men that leaves a legacy. *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise..."* (Proverbs 13:20).

(3) Never lose the wonder of childhood.

Adult life can be so serious. Sometimes too serious. While the marvelous evangelist, Gypsy Smith was in his eighties someone asked him, "What is the secret to your vigor and continued zeal for the Lord and His work?"

He answered, "I never lost the wonder!"

As I saw my little grandson's interest in the plane that flew overhead and the excitability of a little puppy barking, I had to remind his grandpa not forget to take time to be a child again. Let us keep exploring the wonders of the world in which God placed us. Let us live and love in the wonder of it all. Don't mock the noble dreams of youth! Josie Bisset said, "Dreams come in sizes too big so that we can grow into them. *"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them"* (Isaiah 11:6).

- Pastor Pope -

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