

INTO THE HANDS OF JESUS
Rally Day --September 7, 2014 --John 10: 22-30
The Church of the Covenant

Never play “Bible Trivial Pursuit”, that is, unless you want to show your ignorance. Many years ago I and another Associate Pastor in a church I was then serving was invited to dinner in an elder’s home and the elder and her husband dusted off “Bible Trivial Pursuit” after dinner and sought to play it with their two (then) young Associate Pastors. It was hard; it was downright impossible; it was picayune and hair-fact-ish. We called it an evening when the question was asked: “Who was the little known prophet mentioned in the 11th chapter of Acts in the city of Antioch”. No one could answer it. The elder and her husband looked at the two of us like we were dolts and dullards; surely, by now they must know at least one answer! Surely, Princeton Seminary has taught them something! But the answer was: “Agabus, the prophet” Mentioned once in chapter 11 and once in chapter 21. Agabus, Agabus, Agabus –NEVER play Bible Trivial Pursuit unless you want to show your ignorance.

Now may I say, you will never stand at the pearly gates of heaven and in order to be admitted be asked who is the little known prophet mentioned in Acts 11. But as Presbyterians nevertheless we believe in the importance of studying the scriptures, indeed, that there is no saving knowledge of God apart from the study of the Word of God, as the Westminster Confession suggests. But as Presbyterians we tend also to see the study of the Bible as merely filling our heads with knowledge. You may trust me on this one, the study of scripture isn’t about becoming knowledgeable it is about knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The reason we study the Word of God isn’t to know “stuff”; the reason we study the Word of God is to know Jesus. The Bible is filled with stories of scribes and Pharisees who were highly knowledgeable where the scriptures were concerned; but when the Lord Jesus Christ had come to them personally, they did not know nor recognize Him. Our head may be filled with knowledge but our heart may be empty of Jesus. It is our head AND our heart together that knows the Lord.

So what is Christian Education? At baptism a child becomes part of the Covenant Community of faith. We baptize those whom Christ has claimed to be His own. God enters into a relationship with our children and with us as families. God becomes active in our heart throughout our life through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. Belief comes from God placing our children and us into the hands of the Good Shepherd, as our scripture attests. “*You do not believe*”, says Jesus to the Pharisees, “*because you do not belong to my sheep.*” (John 10: 26) Then Jesus goes on to add: “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me...*” (John 10: 27) So we study scripture in order to hear the voice of Jesus speaking through the written Word. We study the Bible in order to know Jesus and be known by Him. We study the Bible in order to enter into a life-giving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and as it says “they follow me.” This is about hearing HIM and knowing HIM and following HIM. Not so much just filling up our head with knowledge. And then Jesus goes on to say, “*I give them (my sheep) eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one can snatch them out of my hand.*” (John 10: 28) Children at baptism are placed into the hand of Jesus; HE first reaches out to them in love and then it is our task as a church and as parents to place them squarely and surely and securely into the hand of Jesus through Christian Education that doesn’t just teach them facts, that doesn’t just teach them about crayons and colored construction paper –but that has them hear HIM and know HIM and follow HIM. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IS PLACING OUR CHILDREN INTO THE HANDS OF JESUS.

Merely baptizing a child is insufficient. We must then fulfill the promises we have made at baptism as the baptism liturgy states: *teaching them all I (the Lord Jesus Christ) have commanded them.*” (Matthew 28: 20) Merely pouring water over their head does not suffice; we must pour Jesus into their

heart and we must pour them into His hands. Are we going to be that kind of church or not? Are we going to fulfill the promise we made at these childrens' baptisms or not? Are we going to make those kinds and types of commitments of time and talent and treasure to be absolutely positive that these precious children entrusted to us will hear HIM, and know HIM and follow the Lord Jesus Christ?

There is a beautiful promise in all of this. Jesus makes a promise to you as parents. When God has placed these children into the hand of Jesus...and when we do everything we can to fulfill our promise as a people, as elders, members, pastors, parents, grandparents, believers in the Lord Jesus, to teach them about Jesus and place their little hands into the hand of the Master, then here is the promise. Jesus promises us: *"No one can snatch them out of my hand."* (John 10: 28) No one can take your child out of the hands of Jesus. Nothing in this life can frustrate the mighty purposes of God where your child is concerned. They may waver over the course of their life; sometimes we may wonder whether they believe at all; their journey may even take them far away from the Lord. But Jesus' promise remains the same; it is unwavering; it is sure and certain; it may be trusted today and tomorrow and every day.

O sheep, hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ today --No one. Nothing in this life. Nothing ever. Nothing can take your child out of the hand of Jesus.

Why is Christian Education important? Because it places us into the hands of Jesus. And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*