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6-14
"RELEASE THE CHILD WITHIN YOU"

5-11-80

I Timothy 4:12

Text: "Let no one slight you because you are young"

One of the unique things about the gospel is that when God reveals himself, it's seldom in some expansive way but in some small way. It's not in the storm, but in the "still small voice." It's not in the wealth of the rich man, but in the widow's mite. When God most wanted to distinctly reveal himself in space, he did not do it in something big but in a small stable, in a little child.

We understand clearly what is required to receive the truth; Jesus says you must become as a little child. If we should enter the Kingdom, we must be as little children. This seems to say that the child in us should never die. Of course, Paul said, "Put away childish things," but he didn't say, "Put away the child in you."

So today I'm interested in letting the child live within and in finding ways to release that child. I don't want to disguise that I've been influenced in part by transactional analysis, the theory of "I'm OK, you're OK," but that's not the whole gist. However, I do think this school of thought ^{has} some pertinent things to say; so I want to weave two things together - the Christian faith and the modern insight of Thomas Harris.

We need to release the not-OK child.

Many of our childhood experiences indelibly impressed upon us the idea that we were not OK. Some of us were reared by families that didn't participate in discussions. We were told what to do. The attitude that developed was "I'm not OK, but the parent is OK," and we didn't have the right to question. If we did question or disapprove, it was considered disobedience. Many of these memories carry over into adulthood, the strong impression of a parent's saying, "You're not OK unless you completely conform." So into our lives go these parental admonitions: "Son, wherever you go in the world, you'll always find the best people are Methodist," "never tell a lie," "You're judged by the company you keep." "Busy hands are happy hands." "Waste is the original sin." "Clean your plate." "You can never trust a man." "Don't walk under ladders!" All are part of the recordings in us. Thomas Harris tells about the mother of a teen-ager who related the following parental edict that had long governed her household procedure.

Her mother had told her, "Never put a hat on the table or a

that O.K. Now how do we get rid of that guilt feeling? We certainly can't erase the recording; it's there for the rest of our lives. We can't get rid of those memories. coat on a bed." So she went through life never putting a hat on a table or a coat on a bed.... When she died, there was ^{ever reaction - After several decades she asked her mother, "Why? The reason was gone, but the edict was still in force."} ^{his mother asked him, how could he commit adultery? He said, he talked back to an adult today.}
So, parents molded our lives as children, and we weren't given much chance to talk back. I heard the story of a little boy who was praying, making his confession: "O God, forgive me for disobeying Mommy, and forgive me for telling one lie today, and forgive me for adultery...."

As Christians, the guilt we feel at times has nothing to do with right or wrong. It has to do with what was poured into us. I read a beautiful phrase by Amy Harris.

Although the admonitions we heard as little children replay in our heads, John wrote in the Scripture, "If your heart condemn you, God is greater than your heart, and knows all things." What a beautiful revelation to know that that still small voice which tells me that I should have tried harder, I spilled the milk, or I brought shame on the family, is not necessarily the voice of God, but is possibly a very human voice from a very human mother or father exasperated by a very human child.

You see, what she was saying is the good news that God and the parent are not the same, and sometimes, although the old parental image won't let us rest God calls through the words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You're OK. You can relax now. So we release the not-OK image, and the grace bestowed upon you means you are accepted. You are OK. That's the freeing word of the gospel.

How can we release the positive child within us? We have a lot of modern ways in which we try to liberate the child within us. In an age of chemistry, those who use drugs or marijuana are trying, in a sense, to bring about a change so that they can liberate the child; others think they can do it better with alcohol. All these are just temporary means. Many people use alcohol or drugs to turn off the parent, because the parent image is too strong or too hurtful or too stultifying. I would assume that, that, more than we realize, alcohol is used to silence a parent by anesthetizing the strangulation control. It is used for temporary release of the struggle by the not-OK child. So there are a lot of unnatural ways to release the child, but there are so many natural ways.