



Divine services for children

Suggested at least once a quarter, on a local or regional basis, a children's service should use the special Divine Service Guide that is provided for that quarter. Children's service Divine Service Guides replace the Sunday morning Divine Service Guide and should not be used in addition to the Sunday Divine Service Guide for that day.

The purpose is to:

- give the children a special word that is understandable, memorable, and relevant
- clearly put them in the center of the congregation
- create opportunity to connect multiple generations within the congregation
- strengthen the value of the divine service and increase their knowledge of Christ and the Bible

In order to help build excitement and to ensure that the entire congregation is prepared for these unique services, they should be announced well in advance. It is encouraged to consider setting a consistent frequency of the services (i.e. the last Sunday of the first month of each quarter). Where possible, the children can participate in some of the congregational functions (ushering, greeting, as the choir, etc.). The person giving the children's message should be someone that has the capability to communicate and connect well with the children. For example, a Sunday school teacher, young adult, etc. that is dedicated to prepare for this responsibility.

Liturgy

The divine service is opened in the normal way with the invocation, opening prayer, Bible verse, and response hymn. Thereafter, the minister at the altar can introduce the theme and a few thoughts, which should not exceed 5 minutes.

The person giving the children's message then begins in front of the altar, speaking directly to the children, who should be sitting in the first rows.

The unique children's portion is per the recommendations set out by the Children's Work Group that accompanied the Children's service Divine Service Guide for that given quarter. This section of the divine service can be anywhere from 15-25 minutes, depending on the number of students and their ages, and can include methods such as speaking, props, skits, demonstrations, and simulation. Questions and dialogue between the children and facilitator are encouraged.

During this time, the priests should sit in the congregation. The children's component can end with a congregational hymn, which allows the priest to return to the altar. The officiant can then summarize the children's component and prepare the congregation for Holy Communion, which should take no longer than 10 minutes. From then on, the service liturgy continues as normal.

It is also suggested that lunch or refreshments with the congregation be available after the service to highlight and celebrate these children services, and to provide additional opportunity for generations to interact with each other.



What is truly valuable?

Bible Text:

“Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.’ Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, ‘Sell me your birthright as of this day.’ And Esau said, ‘Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?’” Genesis 25:29-32

Message: Let us recognize the things that are valuable for our future so that we do not give them away.

Introduction

Jacob and Esau, the sons of Isaac, were twins. But they were very different in appearance and nature. Esau was a rugged man and a skillful hunter, while Jacob was quiet and loved to stay home with his mother.

Esau was the firstborn and was therefore entitled to a special blessing from his father. This blessing was associated with the promise that a great nation would emerge from his descendants. It was a blessing that would have a great impact in the future.

Main Part

One day Esau came home from hunting tired and very hungry. He asked Jacob to give him some of the stew that he was preparing. Jacob demanded Esau’s birthright in exchange. Esau, driven by hunger, only had eyes for the food, and agreed to give Jacob his birthright. Only later did he realize what a great mistake he had made, and he regretted it bitterly.

What led to his mistake?

Esau’s great mistake was that he did not recognize the value of his birthright. Instead he gave up something that was so significant for his future for a moment’s pleasure. Maybe it was because he had inherited his birthright that he did not appreciate it as he should have.

What can we learn from Esau’s mistake?

Our faith, or childhood in God, and our membership in a congregation are great gifts of God, which God has bestowed on us out of grace. But there is a danger that, just like Esau, we might take these very valuable gifts for granted and jeopardize them.





Children

Our children have many interests that are important to them, things they enjoy. Is there anything wrong with that? No! But if they neglect the things that are decisive for their future, a problem will arise.

School and studying, for example, take priority over hobbies. Even if children are not able to recognize this just yet, they should trust their parents and teachers, who instruct them on what is important for the future.

The rebirth out of water and Spirit is connected with a special calling: a great future has been promised to those who are reborn. Our children are not yet able to recognize this fully, and it is quite normal for things that can be seen and grasped to appear more important to them. But also here it is important that they trust their parents and teachers in the congregations, as well as our Apostles, who can show them just how valuable our faith is for our future.

Only those who recognize the true value of a gift will do their utmost not to lose it. And should someone try to take it away from them, they will do everything in their power to protect it.

Conclusion

We can certainly indulge ourselves and enjoy many beautiful things, but we must always ask ourselves at what price. When it comes to our future with the Lord, there is nothing comparable that we could exchange for it.

Didactic Tips

Role Play

Role playing/acting out the story is always a fun way for children to experience the events of the story of Jacob and Esau, bringing it to life. An adult or older child can read through the events that took place directly from the Bible passage as the younger children (guided by adults) act out the story.

Discussion

Create a list together on an easel or very large piece of chart paper of all the things that the children think are important in life. They may list things like sports, school, listening to parents, etc. Hopefully one of the children says “God”, and when they do, write it in very large sized letters, clearly making it the most prominent part of the list.

After the list is completed, ask the children what one thing on the list do they think is the MOST important part of their lives. (God). Since God is the most important part of our life, ask the children what things they do each day and each week that demonstrate how important God is to them. Make a separate list on another piece of easel or chart paper. (Pray, Worship, Read the Bible, attend the Divine Services, come to Sunday School, serve others and share God’s love with





them, etc.) Remind the children that spending time with God, reading His word and learning about Him and how He wants us to live is SO important for all of us as followers of Christ.

Supplemental Notes and Activity Ideas

A Birthright was a special honor given to the firstborn son. It included a double portion of the family inheritance along with the honor of one day becoming the family's leader. The oldest son could sell his birthright or give it away if he chose, but in so doing, he would lose both material goods and his leadership position. By trading his birthright, Esau showed complete disregard for the spiritual blessings that would have come his way if he had kept it.

Esau traded the lasting benefits of his birthright for the immediate pleasure of food. He acted on impulse, satisfying his immediate desires without pausing to consider the long-range consequences of what he was about to do. It is easy for anyone to fall into the same trap. When we see something we want, our first impulse is to get it. At first, we might feel intensely satisfied and sometimes even powerful because we have obtained what we set out to get. But immediate pleasure often loses sight of the future. We can avoid making Esau's mistake by comparing the short-term satisfaction with its long-range consequences before we act.

Thought-Provoking Questions

- What does it mean to put God first in our lives?
- What kinds of things can you do every day to spend time with God?
- Recite the first commandment. What does it mean to you?

Further Scripture Reading

- **Philippians 1:21** – *"...I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ..."*
- **Deuteronomy 4:29** – *"But from there you will search again for the Lord your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him."*
- **James 4:8** – *"Come close to God, and God will come close to you."*