

"No, That's Not for You"

Text: Matthew 18:1-10

God fill our hearts with joy and thanksgiving for the amazing things he has reserved for us in heaven, through faith in Jesus Christ, as well as the amazing things he provides for us here on earth. Amen.

Fellow Representatives of our Lord Jesus:

As, I suspect, was the case with many of you, my childhood was rich in happiness and love, but rather poor in material things. Lots of PayLess shoes and hand-me-downs. You can imagine my excitement therefore when dad brought home a shiny new bike. My 6-year-old mind instantly calculated that my older brother already had a bike, and my younger sister couldn't yet ride a bike, so this little beauty was all mine. I climbed aboard, beaming. And then came those ominous words: "*No. That's not for you.*" My older brother got the new bike, and I inherited his old one. Now *he* was the one grinning, stupidly. Looking back, I'm guessing my disappointment was exceeded exponentially by that of my parents, who would have loved to be able to afford two new bikes. They, and I, had to settle for yet another character-building episode. We were, by the way, also rich in character-building episodes.

Blessed like we have most certainly been, our current society doesn't tend to do well with "*No. That's not for you.*" The mindset of many is that everyone is entitled to everything. While we might still have at least a modicum of understanding as to the limits of our entitlement, even that tiny scrap evaporates when it comes to God himself. There, for whatever reason, our society has come to image that they deserve virtually everything, always, and in every situation. No matter that they reject God's Son as their Savior, they still imagine that God must hear and answer every one of their prayers. Though they have sinned – and are unashamedly unrepentant – they imagine that God owes them forgiveness. Though they freely admit that they have in no way earned it, they still imagine that God owes them heaven.

Yet all of these things, and countless others, are not entitlements that God grants to the general public. They are special privileges that he promises only to his children – to you who believe that Jesus Christ paid your sin debt. You are entitled to such things because God has promised them to you, not because you have earned them. The godless have no such promise.

Our text for this morning reminds us of several of God's promises. It also teaches us when and how we are to apply his "*No, that's not for you*" to ourselves. Our text is found in Matthew's Gospel, the 18th Chapter:

ESV Matthew 18:1-10 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ ¶ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ ¶ "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. ¹⁰ ¶ "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.*

This is God's Word, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for our growth, instruction, and edification. That these great gifts might also be our personal possession through the study of these holy words, so we pray, "***Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.***" Amen.

Jesus' own disciples were not immune from the entitlement mentality, were they? They began (badly) in our text for this morning by asking Jesus to settle an argument about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. We would like to be able to put a good spin on this, but this is obviously something that the disciples thought about a lot and argued about on more than one occasion. They wanted to serve Jesus, but there always seemed to be an element of "*What's in it for me?*" That spirit was eventually exorcised by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but it plagued even Jesus' closest followers throughout the time of their earthly walk with him.

Yet just here, before we go one step further, stop and ask yourself just how you feel about that. Not how you feel about wanting to be called great in heaven but how you feel about condemning that unseemly attitude or character flaw in Jesus' disciples. We could pretty much condemn others all day long and it wouldn't really bother us in the least, would it? Why is that? Because we are good at *wrongly* applying “No, *that's not for you*” to God's law.

It's easy and non-threatening to point out problems in others. In fact it would be hard to imagine a better way to make the Christian faith more superficial and less relevant than to spend our time pointing out the flaws and failures in others. Even if we were to go a step further and conclude our general condemnation of others with a good strong proclamation of how Jesus died for their sins and therefore earned forgiveness also for them, we would still remain insulated and detached as a result. Examining even the truth will turn that truth into mere trivia unless and until that truth is applied personally.

The problem, of course, is that that sort of thing *does* insulate and detach us. Examining and condemning faults in others doesn't tend to help us, guide us, encourage or strengthen us. In fact it's exactly that sort of thing that turns Christians into good little Pharisees – those who strain gnats and swallow camels, or who pick at specks in the eyes of others while ignoring the massive plank that is all ours. A good Pharisee comes to imagine that condemning sin in others is actually the good work that he does to make himself look better in God's eyes – which is an extremely seductive lie.

You and I have way too many obvious failures in our own lives to spend our time and energy on others. So also in our text for this morning we err greatly if we read these words and think of others. These words were not preserved down through the ages just so that the living could condemn the behavior of men who have been dead for 2000 years. They were preserved as warnings for you and me. More specifically, this sentence we are about to read again was not carried across the centuries for Peter, James, and John but for you and me. ***“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ ¶ “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!”***

Did you think about yourself or someone else when you heard or read these words? Did they perhaps bring to mind some other parents that you regard as failing in particularly spectacular fashion to raise their children as they ought, or someone else who is setting a bad example by their actions? Or did you think about your own failures? Was your reaction: “No. *That's not for me.*”?

Like any good, properly applied spanking, the law has to sting intensely to do any good, and it has to sting *me, not someone else*. Our sinful flesh has to feel the pain, or we won't be interested in our Savior. The problem here is actually two-fold. Not only can we get pretty good at insulating ourselves by applying the law always and only to others, every time we do so we diminish our Savior – we make him more and more unnecessary. That's when we start to get bored with, and detached from, the Christian faith. Worse still, the problem has a cumulative effect. It builds up over time. Every time I apply God's law to someone else, I become a little more self-righteous and a little more detached and disinterested.

Remind yourself therefore, every time you read God's Word, that God is there speaking not to others; he is talking to you – young, old, married, single, parent, or grandparent. You. This morning, for example, our text is not just talking about being a bad parent. It's talking about giving offense – the sin our society has all but forgotten.

God's Word identifies two different considerations that each of us is supposed to apply to our own actions. The first is whether or not God has either forbidden or commanded that particular action. The second consideration – the one that is routinely ignored today – is the effect my actions will have on my neighbor, including also my own family members. The first looks inward and asks “*What about me?*” The second looks outward and asks “*What about everyone else?*” An action that is not in itself wrong can still result in great harm to those around me. For example, instead of asking, “*Am I sinning every time I skip church or refuse the benefits of Bible Class?*” a better question would be, “*What lesson am I teaching my fellow Christians – including my own family members – every time I do?*” Nowhere in God's Word will we ever find the divine decree concerning the study of his Word, “No. *That's not for you.*”

You may have noticed that both the Scripture readings for this morning and the sermon text refer to angels. These Bible readings were chosen because some Christians set aside this Sunday as the

day they thank God for his gift of angels. While that's certainly appropriate for Christians, it is really *only* appropriate for Christians. Those who reject Jesus as Savior are excluded, despite their expectation. They can expect to hear only God's ominous decree, "*No. That's not for you.*" God created his angels to aid those who are his, not those who are not. The only encounter with angels the godless will experience will be at the final judgment: "***The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***"
ESV(Matthew 13:41-42)

Hear this well. Use it to beat your old Adam into submission, day by day. This terrible promise from God is as sure and certain as any other, and that is where our sinful flesh would lead us. How unimaginably horrible to stand before our God on the Judgment Day, to see heaven in the distance, and yet to hear the Righteous Judge declare, "*No. That's not for you.*"

While that is certainly Biblical and therefore true, that's not why Jesus came to earth. He came not to condemn but to save. Not simply to correct our behavior but to pay the debt that we could not. All of you are well familiar with John 3:16, yet the verse that follows is just as beautiful, just as comforting: "***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.***" (John 3:16-17)

Jesus came to pay our sin-debt. He came to remove the barrier that was preventing us from entering heaven – our sin. This he did. You and I stand holy and forgiven in his sight through faith alone in Jesus as Savior. Because of what Jesus has fully accomplished, and because of the faith he has created in our hearts, we can now know with confidence that when the Righteous Judge sentences the godless to eternal torment in hell, his children can know that what we, in effect, will hear next is, "*No. That's not for you. Rather come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom.*" The threat that remains is therefore *not* whether or not our sins have been paid for. They have. The threat that remains are those things that can seduce us into abandoning or starving to death the saving faith that he has created within us. It is the power of God's Word that prevents that unmitigated disaster.

How richly our God has blessed us and continues to provide for and protect us, moment by moment. Give thanks to your Savior that he not only came to seek and to save, he still makes our salvation his ongoing concern – as do the angels he created to carry out his will in the service of undeserving sinners like us. Amen.

ESV **Daniel 10:10-14** And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹ And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. ¹² Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. ¹³ The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, ¹⁴ and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."

ESV **Revelation 12:7-12** Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

ESV **Matthew 18:1-10** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ ¶ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ ¶ "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. ¹⁰ ¶ "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.



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The 16th Sunday after Pentecost – September 28, 2025

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 199 (Blue Hymnal)

"We Have a Sure Prophetic Word"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 1ff. (Blue Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Daniel 10:10-14) As with all things unseen, the subject of angels has long fascinated God's people. As is also true of the "unseen", our understanding of angels is limited. Our first Scripture reading tells of the Archangel Michael, whom we regard as Israel's prince and defender. Especially when the Bible speaks of heavenly things, our full understanding will be limited until all is clarified in heaven. The problem is not that God's Word is unclear but our human inability to comprehend.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 30 (Blue Hymnal Page 67)

The Second Lesson: (Revelation 12:7-12) In our New Testament Lesson we again find reference to Michael, who with "his angels" fought against and defeated Satan and those that followed him in his rebellion against God. The good news is that Satan was defeated. The bad news is that he and his evil angels were cast to earth, where they now seek to destroy God's children. While we may have many questions about why God did what he did, for now we content ourselves with those facts that we *do* know, and with thanking our God for the gift of his holy angels. God created them to serve and defend those that are his. In other words, he made them for us.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed (Projected on Screens)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 473 (Blue Hymnal)

"Seek Where May to Find a Way"

The Sermon – Text: Matthew 18:1-10 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"No, That's Not for You"

The Offertory – (Blue Hymnal page 7)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 479 (Stanzas 1-4) (Blue Hymnal)

"How Can I Thank You, Lord"

The Prayers of the Day

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Blue Hymnal page 9)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Blue Hymnal page 14)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 479 (Stanza 5) (Blue Hymnal)

"How Can I Thank You, Lord"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time.

A note on Communion: It is a matter of conscience among us, drawn from God's Word, that communing together is an intimate expression of the unity of faith and confessional fellowship. We therefore ask that only those who have publicly declared their unity of faith with us through membership in a CLC congregation approach the altar. Please speak to the pastor after the service for the information you would need and want before communing.

Attendance – Sunday (32) Average (37)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Women's Fellowship Meeting

CLC News – Pastor Drew Naumann has accepted the call to Messiah of Eau Claire. That congregation has now called Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer to serve as their third pastor. Pastor Ben Libby has returned the call to Living Savior of Appleton, WI.

CLC Board Meetings – A summary of last week's CLC Board meeting will be available in the coming weeks.

Midweek Bible Class and Confirmation – Both midweek Bible Study and Confirmation class are scheduled to resume this Wednesday.

Women's Fellowship Meeting – The Women's Fellowship is scheduled to meet next Sunday during the fellowship hour.