

Sabbath, November 16, 2019

Sermons for Awareness on World Orphans/Vulnerable Children's Day

Psalm 146: 5-10 Blessed is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, who expects the

Lord his God! 6 He made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is therein; he

keeps the truth forever. 7 He executes judgment for the oppressed; He gives bread to

those who are hungry. The Lord releases the prisoners

8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord rectifies those who are bowed down;

the Lord loves the righteous. 9 Yahweh guards strangers; he supports the orphan and

the widow, but he deflects the path of the wicked. 10 The LORD will reign forever - your

God, O Zion! - from generation to generation. Praise the Lord!

Read [Isaiah 1:15-23](#); [Isaiah 3:13-15](#); and [Isaiah 5:7-8](#). How would you describe the prophet's response to what he observes in society around him?

Isaiah's opening sermon—the first five chapters—is a mix of scathing criticism of the kind of society God's people had become, warnings of impending judgment in response to their rejection of God and continued wrongdoing, and offers of hope if the people would turn back to God and reform their lives and society.

But perhaps the strongest emotion that comes through his words is a sense of grief. Based on his understanding of who God is and what He wants for His people, the prophet is mourning what has been lost, the countless forgotten people who are being hurt, and the judgment that is to come on the nation.

Isaiah continues this pattern through his prophetic ministry. He urges the people to remember what God has done for them. He also offers these people the hope of what God wants to do for them in the future. Thus, they should seek the Lord now, for this renewed relationship with Him will include repenting of their current wrongdoing and changing the way that they treat others.

In chapters 58 and 59, Isaiah specifically returns to the concern for justice. He again describes a society in which "justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter" ([Isa. 59:14, NIV](#)). But he also affirms that God is aware of it and that God will rescue His people—the "Redeemer will come" ([Isa. 59:20, NIV](#)).

Throughout the book of Isaiah, a significant part of the prophet's attention is given to proclaiming the coming Messiah, one who would ultimately reestablish God's reign on earth and would bring justice, mercy, healing, and restoration with Him.

Read Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 11:1-5; Isaiah 42:1-7; and Isaiah 53:4-6. How do these prophecies fit with what you understand of the life, ministry, and death of Jesus? What do these prophecies suggest about the purpose of His coming to this world?

Special Needs Ministries

Supporting Families and Vulnerable Children in Special Circumstances

The Basics

Children with special needs comprise a large and very diverse group of children. The broad term "special needs" includes learning disabilities, language impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbances, physical disorders, impairment with movement, and difficulty with hearing or seeing. While each disability is different, there are often similar characteristics.

- **Learning disabilities.** Children with learning disabilities fall within the normal range of intelligence; in other words, they are not mentally retarded. They do have difficulties in school-related areas, especially reading, writing, or math. Children with learning disabilities do not have a problem controlling their emotions, nor do they have trouble seeing or hearing.
- **Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.** Children with ADHD have trouble focusing on any one thing and are easily bored. They show extremely high levels of physical activity, find it hard to suppress their emotions, and don't spend a lot of time thinking before they act.
- **Autism spectrum disorder.** Children who are diagnosed with these disorders have symptoms that range from a severe form, called autistic disorder, to a milder form, called Asperger syndrome. However, all children with autism spectrum disorders demonstrate deficits in three areas: social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and repetitive behaviors or interests. Children with ASD do not follow the typical patterns of child development. Some children show differences at birth. In most cases, however, the problems in communication and social skills become more noticeable as the child lags farther behind other children the same age. Some children start off developing normally, but some time between the first and third years, the deficit behaviors become apparent.
- **Mental retardation.** Children who are mentally or intellectually retarded function at an intellectual level that is below average. They have difficulties with learning and daily living skills, such as basic communication, self-care (for example, toilet training), and social skills. Diagnoses range from mild, which is the most common type, to profound, which occurs rarely. Mildly mentally handicapped children develop social and communication skills during their first five years but begin to have difficulties when they enter school. They usually can attain a level of sixth grade in formal schooling. Moderately retarded children learn to talk and communicate, but usually have poor social skills. With training, they can learn some skills and take care of their personal needs. Severely and

profoundly mentally retarded children, who make up about 5 percent of the mentally retarded population, have poor muscle coordination and limited communication and self-care skills during early childhood. Profoundly retarded children do not reach such normal physical milestones as walking and talking. Typically, these children require constant supervision.

- **Physical disabilities.** The most common type of physical disabilities are hearing or seeing deficiencies, and disabilities that confine the child to a wheelchair.

Care Tips

- **Understand that grief is normal.** Families of children who have been recently diagnosed with a disability will likely be grieving the loss of having a "normal" child. As the child grows and develops, each new phase of life will bring new challenges, so the family may experience the grief process many times along the journey of raising their child. Remember that grieving is a normal and healthy response to any family change or difficulty.
- **Reach out to the family.** Families of children with special needs may feel isolated and lonely. Support them through phone calls, cards, and visits to their home. Reassure the parents and children that the church community cares about them. Be a constant and reliable ally—parents need to know that the church will support them now as well as in the future.
- **Believe that all children are important.** Remind the family often, through your words and actions, that all children are valuable and precious. Look for the child's unique qualities, and focus on what he or she adds to the family or your ministry.

What not to say

- **"Are your other children normal?"** Having a child with special needs affects every member of the family, often splintering them apart just when they need each other the most. Make sure your comments are directed to building up the family as a whole, rather than creating more distance with uninformed and hurtful comments.
- **"I'm so sorry for you."** Children with special needs have a lot to offer to their families, churches, and communities. Choose encouraging words to help parents find the strengths in their children.

What to say

- **"Please know that you're not alone in this."** When faced with rearing a child with special needs, parents often feel isolated. Gently reminding them that the church is there is a good first step in supporting them.

- **"I'll pray for you."** Knowing that others are petitioning God on their behalf, and are asking God to guide them, can be an immense help to a struggling family.
- **"How can I help?"** Help comes in many forms. Maybe it's a dinner after an exhausting day of testing. Maybe it's an offer to take siblings to a special outing. Maybe it's offering to take notes at doctor visits, or compile research. The simplest way to find out how best to help is to ask.
- **"I trust God has a plan."** Affirmation that God is in control can be a real form of support to a special-needs family.

ORPHANS & VULNERABLE CHILDREN DEFINED

The concept of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) does not adhere to a universal definition and varies across countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The following definitions of a child, an orphan and of vulnerability have been adopted:

The child

Defined by the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."

The orphan

The official definition of an orphan is a child aged zero to 17 years whose mother, father, or both have died . There are, however, other children who are referred to as social orphans even though one or both of their parents may still be alive but who have been unable to perform parental duties because of illness or acute poverty among other reasons.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is viewed as "a high probability of a negative outcome", or an expected welfare loss above a socially accepted norm, which results from risky or uncertain events, and the lack of appropriate means to deal with them. Vulnerability leaves one at risk of exposure to stressful situations. The degree and type of vulnerability however, varies in each context and overtime.

Vulnerable child

A vulnerable child is defined as being under the age of 18 years and currently at high risk of lacking adequate care and protection. Accordingly, all children are vulnerable by

nature compared to adults, but some are more critically vulnerable than others. “Child vulnerability is a downward spiral where each shock leads to a new level of vulnerability, and each new level opens up for a host of new risks. In other words, the probability of a child experiencing a negative outcome rises with each shock.” (World Bank OVC Toolkit)

Characteristics of children defined as vulnerable include those:

- orphaned by the death of one or both parents;
- abandoned by parents;
- living in extreme poverty;
- living with a disability;
- affected by armed conflicts;
- abused by parents or their carers;
- malnourished due to extreme poverty;
- HIV-positive;
- and finally, those marginalized, stigmatized, or even discriminated against.

All vulnerable children have one common denominator: they have no reliable social safety networks on hand to depend upon in order to adequately manage the risk to which they daily exposed.

- Orphans and vulnerable children are deprived of their first bulwark, their parents. The causes, temporary or permanent, include the following: • They lost their immediate family or guardians (orphans). • They lost contact with their immediate family. This is the case for street children, unaccompanied displaced children or refugee children. • They are separated from their parents. This is the case when they are incarcerated or when the children have been abducted.
- their immediate family has blamed others for their responsibility. This is the case, for example, of disabled children or children of poor families who are placed in a specialized institution. • Long-term hospital care, such as for health reasons, such as HIV positive serology, is provided. • They are placed, following an administrative or judicial decision, in an educational center, a remand center, a

reeducation institution or a penitentiary institution. This is the case, for example, of suspected or convicted offenders or asylum-seeking children.

The reasons can be very varied, but separation from parents and family is most often detrimental to the well-being and general development of the child. What's more, placement in a specialized facility is often not the best solution for children on their own. Children no longer benefiting from the advice and protection of their immediate family are often more vulnerable and are at greater risk of becoming victims of violence, exploitation, trafficking, discrimination or other forms of abuse. In conflict situations, the involuntary separation from the family and the community and the fact that they can no longer rely on their protection, as the child sometimes has to leave the country, greatly increases the risk of exposure. violence, physical abuse, exploitation or even death. Surviving children struggle with malnutrition, illness, physical and psychological trauma, and cognitive and emotional development problems. Unaccompanied girls are especially at risk of sexual violence. Unaccompanied boys, on the other hand, are at great risk of forced or "voluntary" participation in violence and armed conflict.

In Central and Eastern Europe alone, nearly 1.5 million children are dependent on the state. • In Russia, the annual number of "children on their own" has more than doubled in the last 10 years, despite the drop in the birth rate. • Conflicts have orphaned or

separated from their families 1 million children in the 90s. • It is estimated that between 2 and 5 percent of the refugees are unaccompanied children. • In 2010, an estimated 106 million children under the age of 15 will have lost one or both parents. Among them, the number of children orphaned by HIV / AIDS is expected to exceed 25 million. In 12 countries in Africa, orphans are expected to account for at least 15 percent of children under 15 in 2010.

Matthew 5: 44 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven • Psalm 146. God of mercy. • Psalm 146: 6-9 encourages us to praise our Creator God, and to trust in Him because... He keepeth truth for ever; he executeth judgment for the oppressed; he giveth food to the hungry. He raiseth up the humble, he loveth the righteous, He preserveth the strangers. The best way we can serve God is to be like Him, to the best of our ability. James 1:27 This is the pure and undefiled religion before God the Father: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Malachi 3: 5 And I will come to you for judgment, and will testify quickly against the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the sorcerers, and the oppressors of the poor, and for the widow, and the fatherless, and the oppressor of strangers; for they shall not fear me, saith the LORD of hosts.

CALL :

Ezekiel 22: 7 In thee have they set light by father and mother; and in you it is done that is hard for a stranger; in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow.

Zechariah 7:10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against your brother in your heart.

Jeremiah 22: 3 "You shall not oppress or harm the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow, and you shall not shed innocent blood in this place.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good, seek justice, defend the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow.

Proverbs 31: 8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.

Psalms 68: 5 God is the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widows, in his holy habitation.

Psalm 82: 3 Protect the cause of the poor and needy; judge the poor and needy

Job 29: 12 Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him

Isaiah 1 :16, 17 Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.