

## **THE HOLY TRINITY      “Hear, Love, Teach, Talk, Bind, and Write God’s Words” Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

I have a bat because I want to talk about ball games. It is that time of year that our children and grandchildren are active in playing ball. That means that parents and grandparents are active in driving to ball games, sitting in lawn chairs and sweating out a couple of hours of youth baseball or softball. It seems like there are games every night and tournaments every weekend. Families are running from one game to another and spending hours at ball diamonds.

I have been there, done that, don’t want to do it again. With five children active in sports we experienced those years of having kids playing here, there and yonder. To be honest, we could not keep up with it. The only way we could do it without grandparents nearby is that many good people here gave our children rides to and from games. Having said that, every so often, on a nice evening, I wish I did have a game to watch. So if I show up at one of your children’s games, don’t worry, I’m not stalking your family, I am just having a flashback to the days of watching my own kids play ball.

This is more than just a dad’s nostalgia for the “good old days.” I want you to know I’ve been where you are so you will understand I know that of which I speak. There needs to be a balance in our kids’ lives. We pack our children’s schedules with so many sports that we don’t let kids be kids and allow them to amuse themselves with their own creativity. What are we doing to them and to us? I heard on a recent Cardinals baseball broadcast that fewer than 20,000 people have played major league baseball in over 125 years of its history. That is from the greatest of Hall of Famers to those who pitched just one inning or had only one at bat. So if you are sitting in the stands of the kids’ ball game thinking that your child or grandchild will be the next Stan Musial or Albert Pujols, you should have your head examined.

“Oh, Pastor, I know that chances are pretty slim that Johnny or Janie will play professionally, but they could get a college scholarship.” Think of those T-ball games you have watched. One little kid hits the ball off of the stand into the outfield. Fifteen other little kids all run into the outfield together chasing the ball leaving no one in the infield to catch a

throw. Will any of those baseball prodigies get a college scholarship? Maybe, but by then the game won't be fun for them any longer. I know from the experience of my children's friends who have not enjoyed but instead have become burned out on the sport in college. They would rather have a life than to live for their coach.

For now we hold our breath whenever the ball is hit to our young one. We live vicariously through them whenever they are at bat just knowing that their next hit will clear the outfield fence. We are living out our dreams through our children's lives. Why am I making a big deal out of this? It's only a game, after all. Not when it has taken over our families' lives the way it has. We ask for more and more games which mean less and less religion instruction. "Can't make it to Sunday School, Pastor, we have games to go to." We ask for more and more tournaments which mean less and less worship attendance. "Can't be at church this Sunday, Pastor, we will be out of town at a ball tournament."

As important as these games are to us now when our children are young, I can almost guarantee to you that they will not be playing that game when they are 18, 19 or 20 years old, at least not competitively. I sure can guarantee you that during those same years they will be tempted to engage in behaviors that will not only threaten their Christian faith but also endanger their lives. And if all we have done as parents is to teach them how to play ball, they will be terribly unprepared to resist those temptations. That bat we have put into their hands now won't help them a bit then when it comes to defending themselves from those temptations.

The only way that our children will make good, right and healthy decisions when it comes to their later life choices is with the Word of God that we put into their hands now. That is our job as Christian parents for our baptized children. Yes, we have pastors and teachers in our day school, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. They are important, godly gifts to our families. But we dare not turn over the entirety of our children's Christian education to those people. Moms and Dads, it is our jobs and God-given callings to teach the Holy Bible to and to pass on the Christian faith to our children.

This can't be done with one of those "do what I say, not what I do" attitudes. It is also more than just going to church, driving them to Sunday School and then going home. We pass on faith in Jesus Christ as Savior in the ways we

carry ourselves every day, in the words we speak, in how we talk to and about others, in the shows we watch, by the priorities we have, by how we handle stress, and in the ways we react to bad breaks. Notice the verbs of this passage: teach, talk, bind and write. God's Word is by our eyes to influence what we see. God's Word is on our hands to affect what we do. God's Word goes with us as we leave our houses and also when we return home. The Christian faith is caught by children even more than it is taught to children.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” In Judaism this is called the Shema, its most basic confession of faith. Among nations that worshipped many different gods, the ancient Israelites were unique, having only one God. The Hebrew language has two words for “one,” with one meaning “singularity” and the other meaning “unity.” This is the one for unity, s in Genesis 2:24 where the man and woman become husband and wife, “one flesh.” Here this word gives us a hint of what we know as the Holy Trinity, the one God who reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Among the many gods our culture worships, money, jobs, recreation, pleasure, power, it is of 1<sup>st</sup> importance for us that we follow the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment and worship only the one, true God.

We do so when we love the God who first loved us. He has done so by sending us His one and only Son from eternity, giving His human life unto death upon the cross. By believing in the life, death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ, we do not perish in our sins as we deserve, but instead have God's forgiveness of those sins and the eternal life our heavenly Father has planned for us. We then love this God with all we are and have, heart, soul, and might.

The words of this passage were spoken by Moses to Israelites freed from slavery in Egypt and at doorstep of entering promised land of Canaan, a home of their own. The words of this passage also are spoken to us, freed from our slavery to sin by the work of Jesus for us and though still in this life, always also at the doorstep of entering the promised land of an eternal home of our own. In all we do we teach this promise of God to our children and grandchildren. This weekend our country remembers those who passed on a free land to us by their service and sacrifice in our nation's armed forces. As Christian people the best memory we can have of those who have gone before us is that they lived, taught and shared Jesus as Savior with us. In His name. Amen.