

YOUTH PLEAD THEIR CASE

(Eight youth participants, sitting in the congregation)

Introduction by Pastor:

Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight O Lord our Maker and Redeemer. Amen

This past week at L-RC there was a special spiritual awareness week. And among the guests and speakers that were present was a man who may be known to you through the Lutheran, Walter Wangerin Jr. And just this morning I was looking over the Lutheran, since I did not have to prepare as long a sermon as I generally do, and was looking at Walter's article there and I saw some things that were very pertinent related to the message today. And I would like to lift a few of these things out for you if I may. "Children do not exist to please us. They are not for us at all, but rather we exist for them, to protect them now and to prepare them for the future."

"I saw a well-dressed man, a professional, speaking in cool indifferent tones to his daughter. His language was precise, articulate, intelligent and devastating. No one could match his ironic and civil contempt--least of all his teenager. I think he thought that he was being funny and that he was dealing with his daughter as an equal: two adults. Straight talk. No sentiment. No wishy-washy indirection. "We communicate. We don't prevaricate. We tell the truth. We can take it." BANG! The truth he was telling regarding her dress, her friends, her taste, and therefore, her self. While his truth displayed his own self-confident intelligence, it shot dead the child inside his daughter. So who was laughing then?"

"Let the children laugh and be glad."

"O my dear, they haven't long before the world assaults them. Allow them a genuine laughter now. Laugh with them, till tears run down you faces--till a memory of pure delight and precious relationship is established within them, indestructible, personal and forever."

"Soon enough they'll meet faces enraged unreasonably. Soon enough they'll be accused of things they did not do. Soon enough they will suffer the guilt of powerful people who can't accept their own guilt, who dump it, therefore, on the weak. In that day the children must be strengthened by self-confidence so they can resist the criticism of fools. But self-confidence begins in the experience of childhood."

This is youth Sunday, and the youth may have a message for us. How long has it been since you have been a young person? For some of us it's been a long time. Think back, if you can, at some of the experiences that you had when you were young, how hard it was. It is hard for us at every age, but sometimes when you are young it seems to be more difficult than most. And it seems to be appropriate that the first lesson begins this way, the prophet Micah speaking, "Listen to what the Lord says, stand up plead your case before the Mountains."

Okay, today we're going to let the young people plead their own case. Is there any young person out there who wants to plead the case for youth?

Elizabeth: Should we do it?

Jennifer: I'll go if you do!

E. Let's do it!

There are a lot of problems facing us teenagers these days. A main one is... our parents. And...

E. The word that comes up more than any other...

J. What is independence?

E. According to Webster's Dictionary, independence is...

J. The quality or state of not being subject to the authority of another: autonomous.

E. OK.. .so now we know what the technical definition of independence, but what does this word mean to us youths with "problem" parents?

J: All we want is a chance to find out what life is really about-the good and the bad of it.

E: Because you as parents grew up in a different era, we can understand how it may be difficult for you to give us certain liberties that we view quite reasonable.

J. For instance...let's discuss the issue of - curfews. We're not admonishing you for not knowing better, but perhaps if periodical negotiations were undertaken, this unpleasant aspect of our lives could be better understood by both parties.

E. Yeah! Why is it that curfews seem to be set in stone? For the past two years I have been subjected to the same curfew, what's so sacred about 11:45?

J. While we're talking about what's bothering us, why don't we bring up the ever popular subject of... being grounded.

E. Why can't parents forgive our mistakes as we forgive theirs? We're both going through this together or the first time, right? Nobody's perfect!

J. Why is it that once we goof a little, the mistake is branded on our chests like a scarlet letter?

E. Don't get us wrong - we have complete faith in your parental abilities, but we feel that in some instances you judge a little - for lack of a better word -- well, parental.

J. We can't help but get confused when we don't get grounded for blessing you out, but a wet towel on the floor gets us a week's misery.

E. We know you're our parents and we know you love us, and we love you too...

J & F. BUT...

J: How can you know what we're ready for if you're not out there living our lives for us and seeing what it's like growing up these days.

E. Speaking of growing up, our friends have a great deal to do with...

Joanna and Emily break in at this point...

Emily. Wait a second! We have something to say!

Speaking of parents and friends, it's not fair when parents don't trust your judgment regarding friends. Parents have set ideas about what your friends should look and act like. If they don't fit these ideas they are not acceptable.

Joanna. Why don't they trust our judgment? Because they choose to be individuals does not mean they are not kind, caring, worthwhile people.

Em. Believe it or not, we really do value your opinions and approval. It hurts when you laugh at our fads, complain about how we express ourselves, or condemn our friends. It's like parental peer pressure.

Jo. You're right! Friends are an integral and vital part of growing up. We need them there with us to help us along the way. How can parents censor those we need so much.

Em. Friends too, however, can be hard to deal with. Though a true friend will never pressure you into doing something you don't want to do, we do try for their approval.

Jo. While we are still becoming used to this new stage in our lives, friends come in and out of our lives as though through a revolving door.

Em. Until you find a true, real friend--soul-mates - we seem to go around and around overloaded with new experiences, but not get anywhere.

Jo. In a time when it is hard to find true worthwhile friends and difficult to communicate with

parents, plus the difficulties of daily life at school...

David and Kari from the congregation:

David. Wait a minute, it our turn.

Kari. As if we didn't have enough problems with parents and friends, we have to worry about school too.

D. I have so much homework every day. I think the teachers are trying to kill me. I don't have time to do anything but go to school and do homework. All my teachers seem to give homework on the same day as everyone else.

K. I can't even miss school one day if I'm sick. I get so far behind it's impossible to catch up. You know we work more hours per day than a regular business person: six hours of school and an hour of homework for each class, thus 12 hours each day. On top of that we have jobs, sports, and other extracurricular activities.

D. Teachers keep telling us how important our grades are right now and how teachers at high school don't spoon feed you any more.

K. They don't spoon feed you anymore. I have to worry about grades more than you do, I have to decide what college I'm going to and how I'm going to pay for it.

D. I have to think about college too. I heard the other day that they're giving college scholarships in the fifth grade.

K. That's crazy! That's too young to worry about college. You need to live life to its fullest while you can. I never have time to anymore.

Jason and Sarah

Jason: Wait!

Sarah: There's something else that needs to be said.

All we're talking about are our own problems. Certainly, we have our own problems.

Jas. Friends, family, school--The pressures on us do add up.

S. But, shouldn't we be thinking a little more about the thousands even millions of people in the world who are much worse off than we are.

Jas. As Phil Collins said in his recent hit song about the millions of homeless and impoverished

people in America, “Think twice, because it is another day for you and me in paradise.

S. Yes in comparison to many people in the world, our lives are a paradise.

Jas. Maybe, instead of dwelling on our own problems we should be thinking about what we can do to help the poor in spirit, those who mourn, hunger, and thirst for righteousness.

S. After all, isn't that an important part of youth ministry?

Jennifer: Yes, that is a part of youth ministry. This summer the youth group helped with the Soup Kitchen. At first I was afraid of all those people. But then I realized that they were just like me and the only difference was that I had more material things than they do. They seemed to be happy with what they had. It makes me feel selfish that even though I have all I need, I still want more. When I think of the people at the Soup Kitchen, this verse reminds me of them.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

David: Just like at the soup kitchen, people in some other foreign countries have bigger problems than we do but they don't complain about them. When I went to Guatemala last summer, with Habitat for Humanity, most of the people there lived in thatched houses with one or two rooms and a place to cook food outside, but they always found time to thank God for what they had. Thinking back on that experience, this BEATITUDE comes to my mind: Blessed are those who hunger & thirst for righteousness for they will be satisfied.

Kari: Listen to what Paul says in the second lesson: But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Elizabeth: The Scripture that Kari just read expresses our feelings perfectly, that it is hard sometimes. One of our hymns this morning also expresses this sentiment: *Speak out, O Saints of God! Despair engulfs earth's frame*: The whole world feels like it is closing in around our ears sometimes. But as the second line says we have somewhere to turn: *As heirs of God's baptismal grace His word of Hope proclaim*. We always have God to look to for a way to go. He gives us direction for life, in spite of all our difficulties growing up. What we're trying to say this morning is that even you in your times of trouble have God to look to also. Let us now rise up and praise the Lord with hymn # 383.

Rise up, O Saints of God!