

Menlo Park Presbyterian Church
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Series: Hatch'em, Patch'em, Match'em, Dispatch'em
Mark 10:13-16

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“Hatch'em”

Jim Candy

Good morning! Well, it is a privilege for me to get to share with you on Mother's Day. I'm so excited about that! Today, we are starting a new series. It is one of those very clever titles that John comes up with...I don't know how...*Hatch'em, Patch'em, Match'em, Dispatch'em*. That's what we are going to be talking about. I'm going to explain that in a second, but to get you ready for it, we have a brief video.

[video]

There you go! Alright, are you ready? We will dive into that a little bit in a second, but first I just want to add my happy Mother's Day to all of you moms, and just permit me, I have to say happy Mother's Day to my own mom...Janie. She is back in Colorado right now. There is a picture of her, right there in the middle. Hi Janie! Are you listening to this? I love you and miss you! Happy Mom's Day! That is my little brother with the glasses on. He is decidedly cooler than I am as you can tell in this picture. So happy Mother's Day to everybody!

What better thing for us to talk about on Mother's Day than our kids and their faith and our families and does Jesus matter or not and how? That is what we want to talk about today. I tell you, whether you are 102 or whether you are young and single in kids are just not even on your radar, here is the deal: Kids are central to the health of any culture. We all need to care about kids. I'll tell you this to...you can tell a lot about the heart of Jesus, a lot about God's heart, in How he deals with kids. So that is what we want to start today.

First, I have to give you a little insight into the Candy family and into hell our house kind of rolls along day-to-day. As some of you know, you've seen pictures of my two kids before...Josh and Micah. There they are. They are so cute! Come on...! Every time I get up here I will probably show them. Josh is six and Micah is four now. But we lived in Colorado; we have this circular floor plans in our house, and what do kids do when they have a circular floor plan? They chase each other, right? All day long. So one day, Micah, who was two at the time, was chasing Josh, and they were going round and round in their circles. Poor little Josh, he is running, trying to get away, and he trips and falls, and he hits his head really hard. We have this really thick wooden coffee table, and he comes down in just...*smack!* ...hits his head right there. I mean it was instant. He had this big bump on his head. So he goes into the corner of the room, and he is crying...

Now, in the Candy house, when you get hurt us, we have something for that. It is called a Boo Bunny. Has anybody ever seen one of these before? Boo Bunny. Okay, good. If you haven't, listen to me...these things are magic! Alright? I don't care how old you are, you put this (it has a little ice cube in there, around the bunny rabbit) on any owie, and it goes away just like that. Try it.

So Josh gets the Boo Bunny. He is over in the corner of the room, and he's crying, and Micah...who may be a future professional wrestler...walks up, sees Josh, sees the Boo Bunny, looks at him and says, "*Mine!*"

"Oh Micah, leave me alone..."

Micah says, "*Mine!*"

"Micah, leave me alone..."

Me...being the great dad that I am...finally intervened and said, "Micah! Can't you see that your brother hit his head on the table? He is hurt. He hit his head on the coffee table. He gets the Boo Bunny." Micah...I kid you not...gets this wild look in his eyes, walks over to the coffee table, grabs it with both hands, and head butts the coffee table. Right? No kidding! He walks back over to Josh, looks at him and the Boo Bunny and says, "*Mine!*" Now you tell me, is it scary that he is going to be in middle school some day, or is it scarier that I looked at Josh and I said, "Josh, I don't care how bad you're hurt, give him the Boo Bunny, Josh. That was the coolest thing anyone has ever done! That kid will play in the NFL with that kind of attitude. Give him the Boo Bunny."

So at the end of that day, like many days for Karen and me, you throw up your hands and you say, "What are we going to do with these kids?" What are we going to do with these kids? You know...it is not a bad question to ask, is it? Every mom needs to ask that question. Every dad needs to ask that question. Every grandparent needs to ask the question, "What am I going to do with these kids?" But it goes beyond that. Every nation, every culture, needs to ask that question. Every church needs to ask, "What are we going to do with these kids," and I think today, our church needs to ask the question, "What will we do with these kids?"

You've probably heard a lot about what it is like to be a kid today. I think it is more complex and more challenging than probably ever before, in a lot of ways. There are kids who are being born, probably at this second, and hospitals around here. What kind of world do they have to look forward to it from them? You know, it is true today that most kids can expect growing up that their parents will get a divorce, and notice...I didn't say *some* kids or a *few* kids; I said *most* kids. That was true for me, and that is true inside the church as well as outside the church.

Did you know that most kids today...get this...will never have a spiritual conversation with an adult. Think about that. Do you believe that? Most kids. Tragically, too, most kids...even the kids who grow up in the church...right now, kids over in Shepard's Village...our best guess is that two thirds of those kids, when they graduate from high school, will graduate from their faith as well. So we need to ask the question today, "What are we going to do with these kids?" And I *know* you care.

Last year, we had a little congregational survey we did. We asked a lot of questions about family and family life. You know what we found? Over 90% of the people who responded said their number one concern, the thing that keeps them awake at night, that gives them insomnia...guess what it is? Their kids and their spiritual lives. So I know we care. And there are a lot of sources we can turn to for answers to the question. Right? We can turn to Dr. Phil, Dr. Spock, Dr. Laura, Dr. Seuss... there are a lot of people who are experts on kids.

What I want to suggest today is that we look at an expert who is uniquely qualified on this topic, who often gets overlooked. Because you see, on this person's resume is not just the idea that they study childhood, He actually created the idea of childhood. Then, he didn't just kind of sit back and watch it unfold. What did He do? He became a child himself...the Son of God. So obviously, I'm talking about Jesus, and I am saying today that I think Jesus has something to say for us in answer to that question, "What will we do about these kids?"

Parents have always cared. Whether it was the first century or whether it is today, parents care. In the first century, you had this great story in Scripture of what we think were a group of moms who grabbed their kids and said, "We are going to go meet Jesus." I want us to work through that today. It is Mark 10:13-16, and it starts like this, "**People were bringing little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them...**" Now stop right there. I want you to just imagine for a second...imagine back to when you were six years old. Okay? Got it? Do you remember what you looked like?

You had more enthusiasm, more energy, more idealism, and more hair...all that stuff. Imagine this...your mom comes to you and says, "This great teacher is coming here, and you get a chance to meet Him. I'm taking you down, and you're going to meet Him." And you feel this sense of excitement because you've been hearing about this Jesus guy, right? You've heard the stories that He took water and turned it into wine. So in your six-year-old mind, you start thinking...*Well, could He like turn me into something like a bird? Could I fly away? What's He going to do? If I meet Him, is He going to do something amazing?* So you have this anticipation.

One day, your mom grabs you by the hand and you start to walk down the road and you look up in the distance, and there is a group of people, and they are all gathered around this teacher, and He is teaching passionately, and people are listening, and your heart just flies! You walk up, and you start to wonder...*Will He talk to me? He looks pretty important. Will He have time for me?* So you walk up, and you're ready to talk to Him, but something happens.

The next part of that verse...verse 13, "**...but the disciples rebuked them.**" So here you have Jesus' followers...I mean, they kind of jump out of nowhere, right? I kind of picture these guys who follow Jesus while He is teaching, that they form this kind of perimeter around Him, and they all have their kind of secret service sunglasses on, and they're talking on their wireless mikes, and they are radioing each other...nobody get to Jesus. Nobody can talk to Him.

So here come these little kids, and they hit the guard dogs..."Sorry, too important, too busy, not enough time...you're just a kid...I'm sorry." And they stop you, and you're heartbroken. But notice what Jesus does (verse 14), "**When Jesus saw this, He was indignant.**" Now let's stop for a second and think. Aren't you mad at the disciples? Don't they make you angry? Can't you just feel that? What are they thinking? Of course Jesus is going to let them have time. The disciples are so out of whack with their priorities. They are all out of line.

I mean, don't you wish they could be like us? You know? With our priorities perfectly in line with this...right? You know, and then I start to think maybe not so much. I start to think of myself. I work at a church. My job is to pour into kids, and I fail a lot. Not only with other people's kids, but I fail with my priorities on my own kids. I start to wonder if maybe...just maybe...the disciples are actually pretty normal. Maybe that is how we would have all responded in here. Maybe...and this is good news...maybe Jesus is the amazing one. Maybe how He responds goes against everything people expected, and maybe we can learn from Him. We need His help.

"When Jesus saw this, He was indignant." Fancy word for he was hopping mad. I love it when Jesus gets mad! I'll just confess to you, because when someone gets mad, you get to know them, don't you? You get to see what they really care about. Something that is important to them has been violated, and so that is Jesus. I see His faced just flustered as He looks over.

"He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them...'" Notice, big emphasis here. There is a double command: Let them come. Do not hinder them. *"...for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.* And you, as a six-year-old, are thrilled, because look what just happened. You can't believe it! This huge reversal just went down. You were getting scolded a second ago by the guard dogs, and now Jesus is scolding the ones who were scolding you, and you as a six-year-old love it! Right?

Then Jesus stops everybody and He makes sure everybody is listening, and He says, *"Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God [and He looks at you] like a little child will never enter it.'* *And He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them and blessed them."* So you run to Him, and He grabs you, and Jesus throws you up into the air, and you laugh and you land, and then He takes you and He tickles you, and you laugh, and then you tell Him how smart you are, and He laughs.

Now I want you to grab something that happened here...don't miss this. Life in the first century was actually really hard on kids too. It's not just today. It was back then. Do you know what the average life expectancy was for people in the first century? Do you want to take a guess? It was 25 years. That is how old you were expected to live. Most families in the first century had a child who would have died. Our best guess is that two out of five kids died before adulthood. Can you imagine? How did they cope with that?

I think one of the answers to that question is they expected it. They just came to a point where they knew that it was going to happen, and so you know what they did? They did not become emotionally attached to their kids. Isn't that sad? The same kind of sentimentality we have toward our kids (hopefully), they did not have because they didn't know that they would be around necessarily tomorrow. And...kids didn't contribute anything to the culture in terms of living and surviving which is what a lot of the population needed to do.

So kids had the bottom rung on the social ladder. Notice what Jesus does once again. You know, whether it is a prostitute, a tax collector, or a leper, or now it is a little kid...Jesus says the last will be first. No one expected that. Don't you love Him for that?

So what does this have to do with the answer to our question? What will we do with these kids? I think there are three gifts (if you pay attention) that Jesus gives us. I hope you leave with these. The first gift is that Jesus gives His time to the kids. I just want to name something right now. This is not easy. None of us would say this is simple. We live in just about as busy of a culture as there is in the world, don't we? When I read that sometimes, I look at it and I go...That's fine, Jesus, but You didn't have to deal with cell phones, emails, soccer practice, test scores. You didn't have to deal with the job descriptions we have. I'm sure there are a lot of really big important job descriptions in this room, right?

But I would argue that Jesus had a pretty imported job description too. If I could summarize Jesus' job description it would be this...reconcile the world to God. That is a pretty big job description, right? There is no time to lose on that. Yet He stops and He gives His time somehow to these kids.

I think there are ways we can do that in our culture, and our world. There are big ways we can do that and there are little ways we can do that too. One of the big ways...I will not soon forget this talk I heard last fall. Somebody in our church who has four children were all grown, girls out of college, and they are still following Christ, still following after Jesus. He was giving a talk about that, and we're sitting and listening to him, and he and his wife went to their kids and said, "Is there something I did right?" He asked very humbly, like, "I don't know what it was, but could you understand so maybe I could have something to pass on to other dads and help them as well?"

Do you know what those girls said? "You were present. You gave us your time." So that is a little predictable, I know, but here is what is so great...this guy was sitting next to me, we're listening to this talk. He raises his hand and asks the question all of us were thinking but no one was going to ask, "How did you still succeed in business and do that? Because I'm having a really hard time with that. How did you pour into your wife and kids like that and still succeed?"

He looked at us, and we were ready for some Stephen Covey time-management principles...you know...going to change our lives. He looked at us, and he said, "You know, all I can say is that it probably is not so much what I did but is probably what I did *not* do." And he held up four fingers and said, "I had four chances to be CEO in different situations, and I said no to each one. He said, "Just because of the way I'm wired, I knew that I would not be able to pour into my kids and wife the way they need had I done that. So I said no."

I mean, it was quiet in that room. What sacrifice! If you're like me, you don't like that word...sacrifice. Right? It's hard. I don't like that, but it was modeled for me that day in what he said. Does it mean less paycheck, lesser house, lesser vacations, less prestige for him? You know the answers to that for him...yes, yes, yes, and yes. Does he regret it for a second? No. Not at all. So that is a big way.

There are small ways too, though. Maybe for some of you, maybe you have little kids, maybe it is just figuring out a great bedtime routine where you can really pour into your kids and make that a special time. Or maybe it is sacrificing by making sure you and your family can have another night with dinner together...a night or two a week. That stuff matters. Maybe it's you. Maybe you're so tired. You're driving home from work, and you're just beat. Maybe you have no energy left. Maybe it is driving home in that car and saying, "God, by Your Spirit somehow, would you please give me that physical and mental energy I need to pour into my family." Maybe that's where it starts.

Maybe, for some of you, it means grabbing some of our Shepherd's Village staff or middle school or high school and saying to them, "How can I give time to kids because I care?" Jesus gave His time, but He didn't just give His time, He did something else. He could have just talked to them, but He didn't though. He put His hands on them. He touched them. Jesus gave His touch.

What does that mean? When you read the Scriptures, you see that touch meaning different things. You know, when God reaches out and touches Jeremiah, He gives him power to speak. Or you get this image of God in Isaiah of God holding our hands as comfort in that touch of God.

Or maybe it is Jesus who heals a leper, but He doesn't just talk. He could have healed him any way He wanted to, but what does He do? When no one else will even come close to that leper, Jesus reaches out His hands, and He puts His hands on him and touches him. What is He saying with that? I'm telling you, Jesus is saying, "You matter. I accept you. We accept you. We love you." That's what Jesus is saying.

Jesus is saying, "You matter." When He puts His hands on those kids, He is saying, "We accept you. You're one of us. You matter."

So my question for us today as a church is...do kids hear that from us? Do kids hear from this church...you matter? You know, there is something that...I've worked with kids for a while now...there's something that happens when they hit high school. It's very interesting! Their minds...and there's actually a lot of brain research around this right now. Their minds are changing. At about 15 or 16 years old, they start to be able to think abstractly. One of things they do is they start to reflect on their lives in a way they never had before. Even subconsciously, they start to ask the question...*Who really cares about me for me?*

So a kid might ask...*Did my teacher really like me for me or did they need me for test scores to be higher? Did my coach like me for me or because he/she needed the team to win? Did my youth pastor like me for me, or did he/she want me to come to camp because it made their numbers look bigger and more impressive, and it make them look good?* Kids start to ask that. They start to smell adult strategy, and they need to know...we care about you for you. Jesus never used relationships as a strategy; He just loved people. And the kids hear that from us.

I want to say this morning, there are heroes right here in this room who are doing this. To those of you who are working with Shepherd's Village, middle school or high school kids in this church, you are working with kids who aren't even your own. You're getting nothing in return except the satisfaction of knowing God is using you. I just want to say to you...you are a hero. You are a hero because you are becoming rarer nationally. There aren't as many people who are pouring into other people's kids the way you are. I want to say thank you!

But there are other ways too, right? For those of you who maybe you hear a middle schooler scream on this campus somewhere, and you just go...*What in the world is that kid doing?* But instead of yelling at that kid, you smile inside because you know the way a junior higher sees church is also the way they associate with God. So if they feel comfortable in this place, you love it! Maybe you even stop and talk to that kid. I just want to say to you...you're a hero.

For those of you who maybe sit in a service, and you're trying to hear a sermon or sing, and there is some kid who is crawling around in the pews, and you can't hear, but you're so deeply glad inside that that kid is part of this worshipping community with us, I want to say to you...you are a hero. You are following in Jesus' footsteps is what you're doing. You're touching that kid. You're saying, "You matter. You belong. You're one of us." I have to tell you, there are a lot of other places that kids can find answers to those questions. So...thank you! Jesus gives His touch.

The last thing Jesus gives...He doesn't just give His time, doesn't just give His touch, what does He do? He gives them to God. He prays for them. I'll say this...I am a clueless parent. I have a six-year-old and a four-year-old. I don't know what I'm doing. I'm trying to figure it out day by day, right? Here is what I will say...I think somehow I've discovered the secret to parenting, the secret of working with any kid. Are you ready?

They are not mine.

As much as I want to protect, provide...I love my kids...they have a parent who is much greater than I am, who loves them more than I could ever love them, and I am so *thankful!* Because ultimately, they don't just need me, they don't just need us, they need God in their lives. They need Christ. So Jesus prayed

for them. I hope today, you will leave this place thinking...*What will we do with these kids?* And we'll answer this question by saying, "We'll give them our time. We'll give them our touch. We'll tell them they matter. And we will give them to God. We'll pray for them."

I want to do that right now. If you will look in your bulletins, in the middle page, there is a little box, and it just says this, "I will pray for _____." Please don't leave this room until you write down the name of at least one kid...maybe two. Maybe you'll write down the name of a kid who is related to you. Whether it is your own son or daughter or granddaughter or niece or nephew...somebody who you know who is related to you, you want to pray for them today.

But maybe one other name too that is not, that you are in the family of God with. Maybe a kid at this church you know or maybe someone from a classroom you know or however in the community that you know them. Write those two kids' names down. Take that with you this week, and pray for them. Would you do that?

Let me pray now: God, we are so grateful to see the heart of Jesus come out like this. It gets poured out on these kids. What a privilege for us to see that, to see Your heart for them! God, I pray today that we could take whoever is low, whoever feels like an outcast, and that we would lift them up to you. That we would put our hands on them and say, "You matter." God, thanks that you do that in our lives. In Jesus' name we all pray, Amen.