

**“Cherishing Children”**  
**July 18, 2010**  
**Grove Presbyterian Church**  
Enter 9: 25 AM

Jesus rarely minces his words for those who misuse, abuse little ones – the micros -- referring to both children and new believers. To harm them is truly scandalous – *skandolon*, which is the name for the part of a trap onto which the bait is attached. Those who lure the little ones, those who snare the little ones, those who count on their innocent trust and then betray it for selfish ends.

What should happen to such, Jesus rhetorically asks? Jesus answers: better to put a millstone around their neck and drown them. A millstone: the smallest about 30 inches in diameter of basalt rock used in the household for grinding corn. The larger millstones were so heavy they were turned by oxen. This is the one Jesus thinks should be attached to the necks of those who exploit little ones.

Listen:

**If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.’ And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.**

**‘For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.’**

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The Media Education Foundation, in a frightening, alarming, disturbing documentary called “Consuming Kids,” reports how the primary purpose of computers and TV screens is neither to teach nor entertain but “to deliver eyeballs to advertisers.” To sell product, they’ll keep kids watching by any means necessary. This explains the violence, sex, base humor, anything to stimulate the maximum jolt of cheap emotion with the least amount of effort. If you haven’t noticed, our kids our becoming de-sensitized to the base humor, sex, violence. The media has noticed, that’s why they’re intensifying these jolts.

Study TV commercials. See how many products are marketed for their social meaning rather for the thing itself. Do you want to be cool? Then you must have this. What you

buy is who you are. Our product will make you happy. You are what you own. Worse, they make our kids believe that what they buy determines their value, and if you don't have it you are nobody. They've always targeted adults this way, but increasingly our children are the bulls-eye. Said one marketing vice-president: "Our role, our initiative is to move product and if we know you move product with a certain creative execution, placed in a certain type of media vehicle, then we've done our job. They are tomorrow's consumers, tomorrow's adult consumers, so start talking with them now, build that relationship when they're younger, then you've got them as adults." One marketing company sponsors secret girl clubs, which really recruit them to test products and spy for them. What is the advertiser's strategy? Cradle to the grave brand loyalty. Try to find a infant product that isn't branded.

Molech is the god worshipped by child sacrifice. Leviticus speaks of it with disgust in this portion of the Holiness Code. This Hebrew code of holiness declares we who follow YHWH will be different from our neighbors. Our difference? We Hebrews will never sacrifice our children. Thought, at times, history reports, they did. At times of fear, times of superstition, times of desire for power, they succumbed and burnt their children alive.

One of my favorite silent movies is called "Metropolis," filmed in Germany in 1927. Metropolis is divided into two classes: the workers and the aristocrats. Freder, the privileged son of the mega-city's leader descends to tour the workers world. The giant machine that sustains his luxury is in a vision transformed into a monster named Moloch feasting upon the zombie-like workers who march benumbed and obedient into the monsters devouring mouth.

Milton describes Molech as a terrible warrior of the fallen angels, smeared in blood and, (in a piece of true poetic expression) parent's tears

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There is a price. A child psychologist mentioned how years ago he'd ask a child what they wanted to be when they grew up. They'd say, "I want to be a fireman, policeman." Now they say, "I want to be rich." Our media – from Disney to SpongeBob -- are masters of consumer indoctrination. SpongeBob's job is to sell them stuff. George Lucas admitted he's not a movie producer but in the business of selling lunchboxes. There's a reason he was inducted into the Toy Industry Hall of Fame.

Entertainment is how they manipulate kids, profit off kids, own kid's souls. They don't care how. Make sure your children understand that the media doesn't care about them, they only want to use them.

The maw of Molech. Why would any parent burn their child in sacrifice to Molech, whose name is a play on the word for 'King?' Simple: as a gift so you could get what you want from the gods, for you to succeed, for you to be better than others.

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There's a deliberate media strategy to compress childhood. They call it "kids getting older younger." For a fast buck, childhood is being squeezed out. 10 year old girls read "Seventeen." A 6 year old isn't a child but a 'tween.' Child products use to be inexpensive; now they're upscale. Sesame Street markets cell phones. 4 year olds demand iPod's. Third grade girls must dress in the hottest fashion and apply the coolest cosmetics.

Sure, it's Mom and Dad's job to protect their children. Which is as fair as asking a rowboat to sink a battleship. It's Mom against a \$15 billion dollar industry.

Molech. This deity supplies the source for the word for hell Jesus speaks about: Gehenna. Jesus' hell is a real place, not some after punishment after death. Gehenna refers to a very real Valley of firepits where the children were sacrificed to Molech. If that isn't hellish, I don't know what is.

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Some parents have decided to fight commercial garbage with high end garbage. No SpongBob allowed, but baby will watch Baby Einstein. Yet there is no evidence that Baby Einstein makes smarter babies. Actually, it harms them. A diet of TV makes it difficult later for the child to listen to teachers. Reports the Media Foundation: "screen media makes it difficult for our children to amuse themselves or calm themselves down."

*Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo. Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows!* (from "Howl," by Allen Ginsberg).

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Most modern toys smother creative imagination. We buy performing dolls or costumes. The kids don't play, they regurgitate. Then they get disappointed when re-enacting Spiderman isn't as thrilling as the movie.

Marketers, not parents, define our kid's values. Instant gratification. Shallow. All about me. Got to have it. Gimme. There's a teenager who's sad because she's been sold an illusion. She thinks Hannah Montana is real. She wants what Hannah has, but can't. But Hannah is a lie. No wonder we see an increase in obesity, medications, anxiety. There's a growing correlation between increased time exposed to screen media and depression.

Molech: to sacrifice to Molech is what the Bible calls an abomination. There is nothing worse. Nothing more repugnant to God because there is nothing more contrary.

What recommendations (besides restoring regulations to children's programming)?

- ▲ How about keeping TV and computers out of bedrooms?

- ▲ Reading is better
- ▲ Being read to even better – we like our lullabies...
- ▲ Avoid the trend toward independent grazing replacing family meals
- ▲ Cut back on buying toys that require batteries.
- ▲ Don't let our schools shill for companies.
- ▲ Kids without chores end up spoiled teenagers.
- ▲ Dress kids like kids; hand-me-downs make sense too
- ▲ Pediatricians advise there should be no screen media for infants under 2 years.
- ▲ Parents: make compacts with other parents (you grandparents too, you can be the worst). Pedicure parties for 5 years olds isn't cute, it's damaging. Agree to stop giving presents to each child who attends your child's birthday party. It isn't their birthday! Agree in the family to halt the proliferation of turning every holiday into an occasion when presents are required and expected. Negotiate between Home and School Associations and the tooth fairy about a fair going rate per tooth.

Nathan, whom we baptized this morning – his name means 'gift.' All children are a precious gift to be cherished.

Will we prove worthy of our children's trust?

Molech or Jesus?