

INTRODUCTION

I am happy to be here today to share with you and to preach to you. My testimony is based on Mark 10:13-16.

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” Amen.

My friends, I want to talk with you and challenge you today with a simple message, “Hope for the Hopeless.” I want to thank Pastor Dykes for his courageous stand in challenging this wonderful faith community to help the hopeless, the voiceless, the helpless and the forgotten children. Many pastors across this country, I daresay, give lip service to it. But I’m proud of Pastor Dykes and I want all of you to know here this morning how proud I am of the Green Acres Church. There are going to be some children who are going to come from dark yesterdays to bright tomorrows. There’re going to be some children people think are outcast and downcast and low class and they’re going to be top class, because somebody here is going to make a difference.

People say to me all the time, “Whoa, Pastor Milton, you adopted SIX! You don’t have that much money.” I tell you that’s all true. Last time I checked my checking account, that’s very, very, very, *very* true! but I told that person who ostracized and criticized me, “I tell you, you got more zeroes in your account than I can ever think to have. But I stand to tell you on my way to heaven, I may not have your zeroes, but I’m those children’s hero!”

When you look at Mark 10:13-16, can you imagine Jesus Christ, the matchless Son, the matchless Lamb of God? “And the brought the children that he might bless them and that he might touch them and that he might heal them?” And the very persons who should have been saying, “Amen! Praise God! Right on! That’s what to do Jesus” rejected the children. The passage says Jesus was very displeased. He said, “Allow the little children to come unto me, because if you don’t, you can never accept the kingdom of God, unless you do it with childlike simplicity.” The passage then says he took the children (and catch this) he picked the children up; He put the children in his arms. He blessed the children. And that’s what I want to talk about today: Hope for the hopeless. Based on that passage, I want to challenge you.

1. GOD HEARD THE CRY OF THE HURTING LAMBS

I was born October 22, 1955. My brother, sister and I were left in a rundown motel to die. The San Diego County Welfare Department found us and placed us in one of the most horrific orphanages in the United States of America. We were raped and abused every day: mentally, physically, emotionally and sexually. They cut off broomsticks and raped the little girls and boys with them. There’s a scar on my eye where I was constantly beaten until my eye was hanging out.

And then they would take all of the little children to the white Southern Baptist churches. Thank God Jesus could hear the lambs crying. They would take us there and put us on display. We had high-water pants, our socks were running over, torn shirts and looking hungry. And they would take us in front of these very affluent churches with great resources and they would want everybody to feel sorry for us and feel sorry for them. "Look at what we're doing for these orphans." And then in those white Baptist churches, they would take us hopeless, helpless, voiceless and forgotten children to the restroom and rape us and then urinate on us and then beat us and then come right back out to the sanctuary and praise God. This is real. This was the reality that many lived in. This was my reality.

But God heard the cry of the lambs. A Catholic nun knew about these atrocities and finally, we were going to be released from that terrible Hillcrest Orphanage. And the night before, many committed suicide, they just couldn't take it. Out of 211, only 8 or 9 survived. And I was one of them. I lived in 13 foster homes. They did the same thing: whipped us, abused us, starved us, locked us in closets and raped us—all kinds of atrocities. And finally, God heard the cry of the lamb. And I was placed in my fourteenth foster home.

2. God would not allow my abuse to be my excuse

Dadie Florence Johnson Brown couldn't read, couldn't write and didn't know how to spell. She was not educated, but she took a broken, shattered, tattered, battered boy that came to her with holes in his jeans, high-water pants, and socks running over. She took me in and said, "I don't know about what you've been through. I can't imagine what you've been through. Some of the things that you've been through, it just...it sounds too unbelievable! But I want to tell you something," and she looked me in my eye and she said, "Don't allow your abuse to be your excuse. Who could be a better juvenile judge than you? Who could be a better caseworker than you?"

Well, you can imagine there was a lot of rebellion and hate in me. And one of the greatest hates I had—I could not stand God. I couldn't stand God. I hated God. I didn't love Jesus and I didn't care anything about the Holy Spirit. To me, the only thing going was dope and coke and smoke and crack and crank.

The problem I had with Ms. Brown was her praying. It's alright if you let me come to your house, but stop this praying business! Ms. Brown, if you're gonna pray, you ought to at least mind your own business and leave my name out of it. If you want to put my name in it, can we just do it on Sunday? But Ms. Brown prayed *every* day, "Lord, help him. Lord, there's some good in him. Lord, don't let him go to jail. Lord, don't let him go to prison. I know you can do something with him." Oh, she made me so sick and tired! I said, "Okay, this is it. I'm tired of God and I'm tired of Ms. Brown and I'm tired of this praying. Since prayer changes, I'm going to get on my little knees and that's exactly what I'm gonna do." And I called God out. I was big enough, bad enough, bold enough and I called him out. I said, "God, I want to go to college. Nobody from my little ghetto school is going to go to college. Mama ain't got no money; foster care don't have no money. The community don't have any money. I want to go to college. And you know what God? I want to be a coach." But that was not my major line at God. I knew this

would get God on his throne when I put this next part to it. I said, "P.S. By the way God, I want to be a pastor." And I knew, I *knew* that would get God! Well, I want to tell you, if you don't listen to any other part of my message, *please* don't call God out.

I found out I could run really fast. We would have races in the street; found out I could run very fast and found I could play football really well and I received a scholarship to go to UCLA. And I felt good! And for the first time in my life, the teachers bought me a brand-new pair of pants. I didn't even think a brand-new pair of pants existed. My socks had elastic in them and my shoes had shine on them. For the first time, I had a haircut with a line. I was somebody! I signed my national letter of intent to go to UCLA and play football and run track and go on to the Olympic trials and what have you.

Prior to my leaving, my teacher told me I was too black and too stupid; I was too ignorant and all I was going to be was a juvenile delinquent, coming from foster care, and there was nothing else I could do. I stood up with tears in my eyes and said, "Mrs. Petris, in the words of that great general, Douglas MacArthur, 'I shall return!'" Four and a half years later, suffering and crying, I graduated! And I went back to Lincoln High School in San Diego, California and looked Mrs. Petris in the eye said, "Mrs. Petris, we both belong to the Stupid Ignorant Club, because I got a degree and my classroom is right next to yours!"

Ms. Brown was born October 22 and I was born October 22. Right before Ms. Brown died, I asked, "Mama, what can I do for you?" She said, "Rocky, all you can do for me, is if you can do for a group of children what I done for you, then my living would not be in vain. I don't have a million dollars, but I hope I made a million-dollar difference." When Ms. Brown died, she had raised and given hop to 44 children and the state didn't even come to her funeral. County didn't even show up. But Ms. Brown, put something in my heart. And I have six children that should not be here today. I have six children that should be dead, but because a woman took a hopeless and a voiceless little boy that never should go to Yale but jail, not to Penn State, but to the state pen. And she led me to Jesus. And Jesus turned my life around. Jesus changed me. Jesus opened my heart. Jesus led me to a woman by the name of Charlene Olgis and God had touched her heart and we adopted six children. Six children that now have hope.

Now is the time for some child that's hopeless. Now is the time that some that doesn't have a home needs a home. If not you than who? There is a child somewhere who's being abused. There's a child somewhere who's being accused. There's a child somewhere who's in the midnight and they can't see day. But here we are. I know there's hope for the future. I believe in my heart that there are a hundred families in this church. I believe that there are a hundred children by this time next year who will come from those dark atrocities. There are a hundred children who will come to a brighter day.

3. God moved me from foster care to people care

I say to you my friends, here at the church—I want to thank again Pastor Dykes, for having the courage to have me stand before this congregation. But I want to say, my friends, the Lord moved me from foster care to people care. Here I am: outcast, downcast. Nobody thought I could do it. Nobody thought I could make it. But here I am. I'm a coach at T.K. Gorman Catholic High

School. Ten state championships and 147 academic athletes going on to the next level, but that came from a foster boy; that came from somebody that nobody thought could make it! What am I trying tell you? I'm trying to tell you there's another Jerome out there! I'm trying to tell you there's a black Jerome. There's a white Jerome. There's a red Jerome. There's a brown Jerome. There are some Jeromes out there and they need you! They want you. The lambs are crying. The sheep are hurting and they need us now. They need us in this moment.

I don't know if you know it or not, but we're all adopted. I hope you know him. His name is Jesus. They hung him high, they stretched him wide. He was buried in Joseph Arimathea's grave. But early on Sunday morning he rose with all power of heaven and earth in his hands and ascended back to the father. And he signed my adoptions papers! The kind of ink that he used was His precious blood! Can you visualize it? That one glad morning when God raps the gavel of time and rolls heaven like back like a mighty scroll. All of God's adopted children: His black children, white children, red children, polka-dot children, banana children, strawberry children—all will go to the same fine house. We have the same Father, same house, with the same relatives. So if we're gonna be adopted, we're gonna go the same house. What about here? What about now? What about this moment? What about us? What about you? What about me? Let's set those children free!

Lastly, I want to say, Jesus touched those children. He picked them up and he held them in his arms. I'm happy today. I'm glad today to stand in tribute to those children that were adopted, or rather that did not get adopted. I stand today for those children who were thrown away in those pine boxes. I stand today to commend this church that it now comes to an end today. It comes to an end this morning. I can already feel it in my heart, that God touched somebody over here. Somebody over here, somebody in the middle, somebody here, somebody here in the choir—God has already touched you. God has already moved on your spirit. And I want to say that there is hope, there is hope in this house. I know there's hope in this house. I feel that there's hope in this house. I can see that there's hope in this house. You think I'm wrong? Let me prove and go on to my seat. There's hope in this house, 'cause there's hope in this pastor. There's hope in this house, because there's hope in you. There's hope in this house. I can feel it! I know it! I believe it! We'll achieve it! Thank you. Thank God. Praise God. Amen. Hallelujah. Thank you!

OUTLINE

1. GOD HEARD THE CRY OF THE HURTING LAMBS
2. GOD WOULD NOT ALLOW MY ABUSE TO BE MY EXCUSE
3. GOD MOVED ME FROM FOSTER CARE TO PEOPLE CARE

Is there any hope in the house today?