

May 10, 2026 – Mother’s Day

## On The Playground

1 Peter 3:13-22, John 14:15-21

On the playground – in my day you’d find:

Girly girls – making sure their dresses didn’t get dirty and their shoes stayed clean and no one could see their underwear; other kids playing jacks or hopscotch or jump rope or tossing a ball or drawing with chalk; climbing to the very top of the monkey bars; racing from one end of the blacktop to the other; walking on the edge of the grass, looking for grasshoppers and ants; the quiet or shy ones, leaning against the school building, reading a book or watching everything from the sidelines.

Eventually someone would wander too far away from the teacher while trying to catch a frog; or someone else would get a little rough and there would be bloody knees or noses; and then there was the time my sister and I got sent to the principal’s office for throwing snowballs ...

... Does anyone remember my story about dropping the Communion wafer at my First Communion? I didn’t drop that wafer and I certainly didn’t throw a snowball at anyone!

On the playground – there were the goody two shoes, the tattletales, the daring dos, the adventurers, the ones who took an hour to walk 5 minutes home because there was so much to do on the playground and the ones you just knew to stay away from...

The Goody Two Shoes – those were the ones that did everything they were told to do. After recess, they immediately turned back towards class when the teacher called or the bell rang. After school, if their parents told them to get right home, they would never think to swing on the swings ... they would get right home. They didn’t even think bad words, let alone say them; and a lot of times they were teased like crazy for doing what they did ... or didn’t do.

And sometimes kids can be pretty cruel. They would call you names because of the color of your hair, the size of your feet, your unpronounceable name or your name that sounded like another word ... My last name was Cody and my brother, sister and I heard the phrase “Cody’s got Cooties” more times than I can count.

They called you names because of the color of your skin, your stutter, your clothes, the fact you packed a lunch – or because you didn’t, because your dad lost his job, because you didn’t know anything about the newest toy or music or craze ... and if you stuck up for someone who was being ridiculed – you got it, too.

On the playground – some pretty wonderful things happened: you made friends for life, you learned to skip, you got over your fear of the monkey bars ... and when bad things happened – those friends for life were there for you.

As we become adults, we can see a lot of the bad playground behavior sticking around. There are those who just don’t know how to or want to grow up. They still “tease” ... but now we realize their teasing is bullying and always has been. They ridicule. They threaten. They hurt.

1 Peter was written during a time of Epicureanism – a philosophy that says “As long as it feels good, do it. If you want to do it, do it.”

Nero was the ruler – he was depraved and he took great pleasure in torture. I just finished reading “The Nightingale” by Kristin Hannah and the depiction of the cruelty of too many of the Nazis who got gratification and entertainment from the atrocities they committed gave a too real understanding of the kind of person Nero was.

Morality was low. Rome needed what Jesus Christ had taught, needed people committed to living like Jesus – needed Christians, but these Christians would be ridiculed for how they lived; some lost their families and friends because of their beliefs, some were killed for them.

That kind of suffering still happens. Many of us have never experienced, nor will ever experience, true suffering for our faith because we spend most of our time with like-minded Christians who believe like we do and behave like we do, or have friends that may not know Christ, but who are kind human beings, who are supportive of those who think differently than they do.

But you may have spent time with people who have laughed at you when you return the \$1 the salesclerk gave you back by mistake, or when you buy a cup of coffee for the homeless man at the corner, or when you refuse to laugh at an off-color joke.

Ridicule – none of us like to be laughed at.

When I was in middle school, I can remember a few things that I did that made me feel I would be laughed at. I wasn't the most popular, and what others thought about me was important.

Plagued with pimples, like most kids my age, I used a cream on my skin at night. One morning I woke up late for school, quickly got dressed, ran a toothbrush over my teeth, grabbed a banana and ran to the bus stop.

When I got to class, I realized that I had never washed my face of the pink acne cream. Did anyone notice? I don't know.

One day, getting dressed in the semi-dark because my sister was sick and still in bed, I slid my feet into my shoes and headed off to start my day. When I got to school, I looked down and saw that my shoes didn't match each other. Did anyone notice? I don't know.

On vacation, my brother and I were racing across the pool and one of his strokes hit me in the mouth, swelling my lip. Did any of the cute boys by the pool notice? I don't know.

But inside my head, in each of those instances, everyone was staring and laughing and judging me. It was traumatizing to even imagine what people were thinking. And those were only imagined ridicule.

People are ridiculed for all sorts of things: tall, short, brainy, skinny, heavy, poor, left-handed, wears glasses...

We even catch ourselves snickering at other people's expense – think you haven't? Have you ever watched America's Funniest Home Videos? Ever laughed at some one falling or dropping a cake ... even if they did mail it in to win a million dollars?

I know people have laughed at me because I can't or won't say a word that my parents taught me was vulgar even if everyone uses it now. I know people have shook their heads when I've lent money out, knowing full well I was never going to see it again.

1 Peter chapter 3 – it's about being ridiculed for doing what we believe to be right, for our behavior, for our belief in Jesus Christ. During the time the passage was written, there was the threat of death. In some places of this world, there is still the threat of death for being Christian. Simon Peter wrote to warn Christians in every generation, in every culture – that there would be ridicule.

Here at First Baptist Church, we strive to be a welcoming church.

What does that mean? When we throw open our doors, we welcome into our church home those who aren't always easy for others to love. We allow this place to be a true sanctuary of healing, of hope, of love, of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We come to know the hurt and the lost who enter our doors, who have found their way here, and how we are given the honor, the pleasure and the responsibility of being instruments of God's love. Others might look at us and laugh, wonder why we would welcome someone who certainly only came in for a handout.

But we know that the Holy Spirit works through those who are ready to love and serve God's children. We know that it's us who have been blessed when we have been given the opportunity to serve.

Jesus ate with tax collectors and prostitutes, He spoke with Samaritans and women, He healed on the Sabbath because He was more interested in justice for the oppressed and in love for the lost and in uplifting for the forgotten than He was interested in worrying about what others thought of Him.

If we do the same, we might be ridiculed. Depending on what we do when we stand up for others; we might lose our jobs, we might lose friends, we might lose our freedom. We might suffer for doing what is right. Peter said that there might be consequences for living like Jesus.

What's wonderful about our faith, though, is that we don't live it alone. The Christian faith is a faith of community. We are told to gather together in worship and in prayer and in study. We are told to gather together in encouragement for each other.

When one of God's children suffers, we are to be there. When one of God's children is lost, we are to guide them home. We have our church family surrounding us who do the same for us.

Thinking of the words of today's prayer – praying for those who didn't have the presence of a loving mother ... maybe because she died young or she didn't know how to love her children or because her mother was cold to her and she learned to be cold in return ... I am first blessed with the memory of a strong, loving mother and also blessed to see my daughters be women of strength and love, too. But I have also been blessed to have had many church moms here at First Baptist – who guided me with their wisdom, their love and compassion.

I think of the women in my life, who are mostly my age now, who love me like a sister and who continue the legacy of love as together we uplift those coming behind us – young adults, teenagers, children ... teaching them as we have been taught, to be God's love.

As we continue to invite others into our fellowship, we open our arms as a good mother does – fearlessly inviting them to know the faith we have.

We don't live our faith alone. When we were on the playground, making our forever friends, we knew we could always turn to that friend – no matter the time of day, nor the need we had.

We don't live our faith alone. The Holy Spirit was sent to us when Jesus returned to God the Father. The Holy Spirit works amid and within us.

Many of us have probably seen the work of the Holy Spirit, seen a changed life.

Many have felt the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, the guidance, the direction, the discernment.

When you have seen someone stand up for another – you have seen the Holy Spirit.

When you hear a story of unimaginable forgiveness – you have heard about the presence of the Holy Spirit.

When you have felt a deep peace settle on you when you don't know how you can take one more moment of suffering – you have felt the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

At one time or another, the Holy Spirit looks like you, looks like me, because at one time or another, the Holy Spirit has worked through you to be God's love.

Look in the mirror as you leave here today and see the Holy Spirit going out into the world, out on to the playground – where there should be only joy and laughter and love and encouragement. See the Holy Spirit – our forever Friend – be there for us, no matter the time of day nor the need we have.