

a resource for
orphan
sunday

WWW.orphansunday.org

An Initiative of
**The Christian Alliance for Orphans
& The Cry of the Orphan**

Orphans Sunday

Sermon Notes Outline

Proposed Length: The average US Protestant sermon is 31 minutes. Each sermon in this series is designed to last 30 – 40 minutes.

Sermon 1 – Exposing the Works of Darkness

Main Text: Ephesians 5:11 – 17

11Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." 15Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (Eph. 5:11-17)

1. The church MUST become aware of the plight of orphans and at-risk youth in the world. The church is not called to “turn a blind eye” to the disturbing plight of our world’s children. Rather, the church is called to “expose” this “shameful” state of affairs by “shining a light” on the problem.
2. Provide powerful and provocative statistics. These statistics are available at <http://www.cryoftheorphan.org/Display.asp?Page=Learn>. Consider showing the related video on the website to your church or show LSM’s “[143,000,000 orphans](#)” video.
3. Provide anecdotes (including local stories) that put a face with the statistics. These anecdotes are available via resources on the Orphans Sunday website and www.cryoftheorphan.org. Some anecdotes have been included in Appendix A.
4. Call to Action: Become more educated about the plight of at-risk youth.
5. Goal of Sermon: Take the blinders off of the church. Break their hearts for the children of the world. Leave them troubled and disturbed. Let me them know that Satan is not happy this problem is being exposed.

Sermon 2 – God’s Heart for Orphans and At-Risk Youth

Main Texts: Deuteronomy 10:17-18, 14:28-29; 24:19-20; Psalm 68:4-6; James 1:27

17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. (Deut. 10:17-18)

28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, 29 so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (Deut. 14:28-29)

19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. (Deut. 24:19-20)

4 Sing to God, sing praise to his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds [a]—
his name is the LORD—
and rejoice before him.

5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.

6 God sets the lonely in families, [b]
he leads forth the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

(Psalm 68:4-6)

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:27)

1. God’s heart for the fatherless (which includes not just orphans but at-risk children) is a consistent theme throughout the *entire* Bible. James says serving the fatherless is “pure” and “undefiled” religion¹. It is not just a concern of God. *It is a priority of God.*
2. Reference the early church’s sacrificial involvement in orphan care. See Appendix B.
3. God knows the name and location of *every* child on the face of the earth. He wants all of them, *every last one of them*, to experience being loved by an earthly family and to know the love of their heavenly Father.
4. Provide a few more anecdotes of children, both domestically and internationally, who seem to have been forgotten by the world.
5. Call to Action: Pray for God to reveal His heart for orphans and at-risk youth to you. Prepare your heart for next week’s Call to Action.
6. Goal of Sermon: Convince the church that God has *commanded* our involvement in the lives of orphaned and at-risk youth. It is one of *His* stated priorities. Let the church know that your congregation *will be* doing something about it.

¹ The word “religion” here has the sense of “worship.”

Sermon 3 – The Bridge

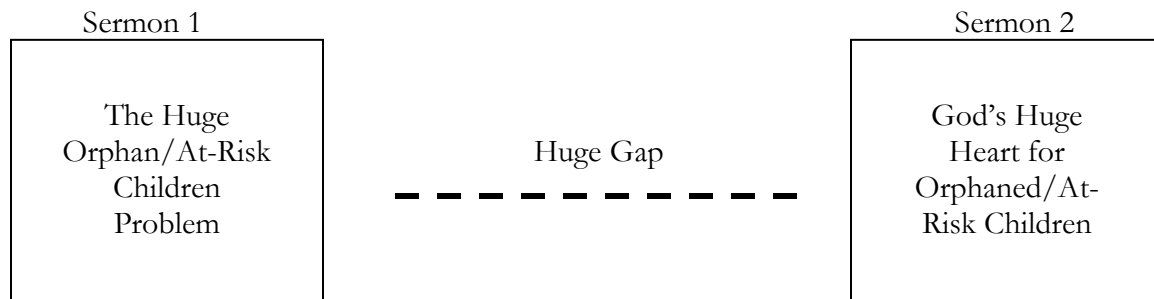
Main Texts: Romans 8:15-17, Ephesians 1:3-6, 2:12-13, 3:14-20

15For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.[g] And by him we cry, "Abba,[h] Father." 16The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:15-17)

3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5he[c] predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Eph. 1:3-6)

12remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:12-13)

14For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15from whom his whole family[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:14-20)



How can this
“gap” be bridged?
By the church!!

1. God has called the church to span the gap between His heart for orphaned and at-risk youth and the huge problem that exists today, both internationally and domestically. The church is God's vehicle to reach the hurting and lost. There is no "plan B."
2. The church is not a disinterested bystander. We were all at-risk youth (Eph. 2:12-13) but God chose to get involved. In fact, He took the ultimate step and adopted us into His family. Drive this point home.
3. Out of the overflow of God's amazing involvement in our lives, we choose to get involved in the lives of orphaned and at-risk youth.
4. Involvement will get messy. It was messy for Christ to get involved in the mess of our lives before meeting Him. He did it anyway. He chose to get involved. It's a choice He's asking us all to make.
5. God will do even more than we can imagine as we allow Him to work in us. To Him be glory "in the church" (Eph 3:21).
6. Make the final Call to Action, the details of which are dependent upon where the Lord is leading your church. Be sure to challenge your church members to go to www.facesoftheforgotten.org to sign-up to pray for the world's orphans by clicking on the "[Pray for the world's orphans](#)" link.
7. Goal of the Sermon: To have couples and individuals sign a pledge to get involved so that someone can follow up with more information, prayer, and partnership.

This sermon series can act as a *kick-off* for more intense and sustained involvement, leadership, and direction from the local church. You should consider already having a steering committee in place for an orphaned and at-risk youth outreach before this series is preached.

For any questions about these sermon notes or to receive assistance in setting up an orphans ministry in your church, please email joe@loving-shepherd.org. Feedback about the effectiveness of these sermon notes is also appreciated.

Appendix A

(While these are true stories, the identities are changed for the sake of privacy.)



Jacob's parents both died from AIDS. He was being cared for by his grandmother until she found out that Jacob was HIV+. Because of the stigma attached to AIDS, Jacob's grandmother abandoned him. Jacob now had absolutely no one to look after him. He was totally alone – an orphan in one of the poorest countries in the world. Every 14 seconds, a child loses a parent to AIDS. A child just like Jacob.



Marta is an orphan. When her parents died, she was taken in by her uncle – who didn't want to care for her. The situation spiraled downward until Marta ran away. She lived in a nearby woods with other runaway children, barely surviving. While living in the woods, Marta was the victim of abuse by the other children - until she was discovered and rescued. Marta is the type of girl who is vulnerable to being forced into prostitution. In the capital city of Marta's country, there are 40,000 workers in the brothels – many of them children. Children just like Marta.



Pierre is a slave. He works from before dawn until past dark, working to please the family that owns him. If he does not immediately obey, he is beaten. He does not go to school. He has no bed to sleep in. He eats alone, away from the family's table. He wishes he could go back to his real family – but he doesn't know whether they are still alive. Studies show that 300,000 children live under the bondage of slavery in this poor country. Children just like Pierre.

Appendix B

Taken from The Early Christians in Rome by Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones

Now in all the early Christian writings the persons to be helped in the first place seem invariably to have been " *the widows and orphans*" of the new Society; for example, 5. *James*, the Lord's disciple, writes how " pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction," etc. (i. 27).

Hermas—circa A.D. 135-40—in his list of good deeds which ought to be done, after faith and the fear of the Lord— love, concord, words of righteousness, truth, patience—places "the helping widows, looking after orphans." — *Shepherd*, Comm. viii.

Aristides—circa A.D. 130-40—has been already quoted.

Clement of Rome—circa A.D. 90—gives as one of his quotations : " He—the Master of the Universe—saith, . . . Give judgment for the orphan, and execute righteousness for the widows."—/ *Epistle*, 8.

Lactantius—circa last years of fourth century — in his catalogue of the different kinds of benevolence and works of mercy which had especially been enjoined on Christians, twice dwells on this peculiar work, and then writes : " Nor is it less a great work of justice to protect and defend orphans and widows who are destitute and stand in need of assistance, and therefore that Divine Law prescribes this to all," etc. . . . And again : " For God, to whom everlasting mercy belongs, commands that widows and orphans should be defended and cherished, that no one through regard and pity for his loved ones should be prevented from suffering death (*i.e.* martyrdom) " . . . " but should meet it with promptitude and faith, since he knows that he leaves his beloved ones to the care of God, and that they will never want protection." This last telling argument repeated by Lactantius had been, no doubt, frequently taught in the days of stress and trial.

These very early references might be multiplied; we find this injunction again and again repeated. It is no exaggeration to assert that among the poor and sad-eyed ones placed before the congregations of believers to help, the poor widow and the orphan occupy the first place.

Early Christian Behavior Towards Orphans

In the early church, God's people became family to those who had no family. I think of the Roman practice when a baby was born. The baby was set at the feet of the father. If he picked up the child, the boy or girl was legitimized and became part of the family. Babies that were not picked up, perhaps because they looked weak, were outcast – often taken outside the city to designated places where they would die of exposure or from wild animals. The Christians reversed this horrible practice. They went out and brought the babies back, adopting them into their own families, and eventually putting pressure on the government to outlaw the practice. www.adoption-by-grace.com