

2026-04-19

Receiving the Kingdom of God

Mark 10:13-16

Children. God blessed Sally and me with two children, both girls, both by caesarian section. We did not have that many problems with our first child. We thought, if this is how children are, we should have more. Our second was more challenging, so we decided to stop after two, mainly because of the risks of having each child by caesarian section. We love our children and our 5 grandsons. The western world in which we live looks at children a lot differently than the eastern and oriental cultures, and we see children differently than children were viewed in biblical times. In biblical times, husbands and **wives desired to have** many children, and they often did. They believed that children were a gift from God as Christians do today. That is one thing we have in common. Hebrew and Jewish families preferred to have boys. For the first 5-6 years of their lives, children were educated by their parents. The mother was the primary person teaching and training the younger children at home. At around 5- or 6-years old children could go to school. Most boys went to school if they were not needed at home. Some girls went to school if they were not needed at home. Parents continued to be influential in their children's lives. Fathers became more influential as their sons grew older. Read the first several chapters of Proverbs and you will learn a father's instruction to his sons. Yet the mother continued to have an important influence over her sons, no matter their age. Girls were raised and trained primarily by their mothers, yet their fathers were important in their lives too. As you should notice from our text this morning, Jesus loved children.

Mark 10:13 *“Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them.”* More than likely, it was the mothers of little children, infants up to around two years of age that were brought in to Jesus. This could be dozens of children. In many cultures around the world, it was customary for mothers to want their little children to be touched and prayed for by people who they saw as having a better connection with God. These mothers recognized something special about Jesus. They wanted Jesus to bless their children. These children did not need a physical healing. The mothers were concerned for their souls. Those mothers knew how hard life was, how close their children were to death. Some of those mothers probably experienced the death of one or more of their children. They were always looking for some assurance that their children would grow up to be good adults. The touch of a prophet, the touch of Jesus would mean a great deal to them. Today, the physical presence of Jesus is not here. His Spiritual presence is always here. We may not be able to take our children or grandchildren to Jesus because He is not physically here, but Jesus can touch the hearts and souls of

our children and grandchildren through our prayers. **Continue to pray for your family members daily.** God can touch their heart and soul. He can change them. Pray that your family members will **respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit** who is at work in their lives (John 16:7-11).

What did the disciples do? They were men. They wanted to get those women with their babies away from Jesus. They must have thought that Jesus did not have time for such trivial matters. None of these little children could know, trust in and follow Jesus. These little children did not know what was going on. They were much too young. The disciples rebuke the women, thinking Jesus had more important things to do and crowds of adults to teach than to waste His time holding and praying for babies. The disciples put up a blockade so that these women with their babies could not get near Jesus. The disciples just wanted these women to move along and get away from Jesus.

Verse 14 *“But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.’”* Jesus **saw** what the disciples were doing. They were intentionally keeping the mothers and their little children away from Jesus. Jesus was not happy about this at all. He was **greatly displeased**. We could say that Jesus was **a bit angry** over what the disciples were doing. Who were they to decide who had access to Jesus and who did not. Jesus could make that decision Himself. Then Jesus gave another one of His shocking statements. *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.”* Really? The kingdom of heaven is made up of little children who are too young to understand about sin and salvation? Jesus commanded the disciples to let the mothers, along with their little children to come to Him. *“For of such is the kingdom of God.”* This is one of those verses I turn to when helping parents deal with the death of their child. We do not understand why some children die and others do not. God gives us His assurance that His kingdom is made up of these little children. *“Of such is the kingdom of God.”* They are not condemned. They are not neglected. They are not forgotten. Jesus loves them. It appears that God graciously extends His mercy to those who are too young or too mentally impaired to exercise faith in Him. Then there is also **something in the attitude and disposition of little children** that every adult must have in order to *“receive the kingdom of God.”*

Verse 15 *“Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”* This reminds me of the admonition Jesus gave to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3). The words, *“most*

assuredly” in the Greek is “*Amen, Amen.*” It means, “*so be it*” or “*I am telling you the truth.*” Jesus wants to make sure the disciples understand He is telling them something that is eternally true. **The kingdom of God is received.** It is offered to people. It is a gift. It is given. It is not taken. It is not earned. This is not an automatic possession of every person. There is a requirement that must be met in order for a person to be offered this most precious gift. There is no action to do. **It is an attitude of trust, an acknowledgement of need.** Sometimes a child at a young age will tell their parents that they are going to run away from home. I think one of our daughters said this. If they actually try it, they will soon find out that they cannot make it in this world without the help of their parents. We must realize as a child would, that we cannot make it in this world without the constant involvement of our heavenly Father. **Even as adults we cannot make it in this world without being born again,** without trusting God as a little child trusts their parents, without being educated by our heavenly Father in the way we should live. Without this attitude of trust and an acknowledgement of need we will never enter or even see the kingdom of God.

In our learning, as if we were little children we must believe and follow the teachings of our heavenly Father. **Children are inquisitive.** We should seek to understand. We should ask questions. We should be careful to believe all that God reveals to us and not fall into the trap of believing the immoral ways of the world. **Social media** is showing us that young children can be deceptively lured away from their parents teaching. Even as young adults in **college**, our children and grandchildren can be influenced to believe and follow a culture different from what they were raised in. Children depend on and trust in the provision of their parents. Children go where their parents go. They enjoy what their parents provide. With God as our Father, we go where He leads us. We enjoy what He provides in our lives. **Children are humble.** They know they need help and they know where their help comes from. As children of God, we are to live in Jesus and in His teachings. As God’s children we know that without Him we can do nothing. (John 15: 4-5). **We are to receive the kingdom of God as a little child would receive it.** Little children do not understand much about where they live. They would not understand the kingdom of God. It wasn’t until I was older and traveling the world that I realized how blessed I was to be an American citizen. Once we are born again, when we receive the kingdom of God, learn to humbly live like His child. One day you will know how precious, how wonderful it is to have received the gift of God’s kingdom.

Verse 16 “*And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.*” What a beautiful picture of love and concern Jesus showed the mothers and their little children. In a matter of a few more weeks Jesus will be arrested, tried, convicted of being the King of the Jews and killed. Jesus took the time to hold and

bless all of the children who came to Him. While preparing for our mission trip to India, we were told that at the end of each worship service that we Americans were at, women would bring up their babies for us to place our hands on and pray for their child. It happened as they told us. When we got to our location in central India, I was paired up with a senior adult woman in her 70's. I was 45 years old. It was 2002. Almost every evening we held a worship service in some village or city. The rooms were always packed. All the windows were open. Heads were poking through each one. The microphone was connected to a loudspeaker that was on the roof of the church so that everyone within a quarter mile could hear. After the final prayer there would be a line of women with babies in their arms wanting me to hold their child and pray for him or her. I felt woefully inadequate. Yet this was expected after each service. While I was holding and praying for one child, I felt this wet sensation on my hand and body. This baby peed on me. I tried not to overreact. The deed was done. I was wet. Nothing was going to change that. A change of clothes for me was miles away. I was given the wet baby blanket to soak up some of the moisture. Someone was aware of what happened and took a picture. If you look at the picture close enough, you will notice I am barefoot. Why? That was 24 years ago. I do not remember. My guess is, it was probably customary for the preacher of that church to deliver God's message barefoot.

It is quite interesting that just a little time ago, in the life of Jesus that He told the disciples, *"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all"* (Mark 9:35). Jesus illustrated His teaching by taking a little child and placing the child in the middle of them. Then Jesus picked up the child and said, *"Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me"* (9:37). In receiving a little child in the name of Jesus is the same as receiving Jesus Himself. Receiving Jesus is the same as receiving God Himself. Now, Jesus has moved from receiving a little child to being like a little child in order to receive the kingdom of God. We do not deserve the kingdom of God. We receive His kingdom when we receive Him as our Father.

Questions to ask yourself: Have you received Jesus as your Savior? Are you His child? Do you believe all His teachings?

Actions to take: Take the time to learn all the teachings of God and practice them.

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