

Hope Christian Church  
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12 June 2016

Sermon Series: *Jesus Said What?*



# “Let the Children Come to Me”

How to Enter the Kingdom of God

**(Luke 18:15-17 ESV)**

*<sup>15</sup> Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>17</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”*

## Introduction

My aim this morning is to magnify ministry to the next generation for their good and God's glory. I'm praying that God will call some of you to consistently pray for our children, youth, and our graduates. Lastly, I'm praying that, for some of you, God would call you to serve among our nursery, children, youth, and young adult ministry.

It is good and right to celebrate moments of significant advance, like moving up from the fifth grade into the youth ministry and like graduating from high school and moving on to university. It is right and proper to mark important moments in life. This is one of them.

The goal of teaching is not merely the transmission of information, but facilitating intellectual and spiritual transformation. The goal of ministry to the next generation is not to enable our kids to rightly answer questions on the Bible Trivia quiz, but to rightly live their lives pleasing to God the Father today and long after they have gone from home. The goal of Christian education is not to keep them happy at home, but to keep them holy in the world.

Children are not acolytes to be adorn the walls of the church, they arrows to be sent out into the world to magnify the name of Jesus throughout every profession and vocation and to carry the glory of God to the ends of the earth. Our goal for every child who grows up among us, is to be solidly grounded in word of God, to be filled with the Spirit of God, and to daily experience the steadfast love of God—living out that love through consistent obedience and knowing from the depth of their souls that God deeply and personally loves them.

You might be tempted to think that spending so much time on kids is a necessary evil. You might think, "This is just one of those mornings you have to endure." If you were to think such things you'd be in good company. You'd be thinking the same thing that the disciples were thinking one morning long ago. However, you'd be wrong to think that this is a burdensome exercise that must be endured. This is not a burden to be endured, but rather a blessing to be enjoyed. We enjoy ministry to children and youth because we love the next generation. It is a delight to help little people learn to love Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

## It's Easy to Belittle the Little's

It's easy to look down on children (no pun intended). It's easy to belittle the little people. This is exactly what the disciples did.

### **(Luke 18:15 ESV)**

*<sup>15</sup> Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.*

Parents were bringing their kids to Jesus, including infants. Matthew tells us they brought them to him so that Jesus would "lay hands on them and pray" for them (Mt. 19:13). These

parents were happy to bring their children to Jesus so that he would bless them. The disciples saw this and decided to put a stop to it.

The disciples **rebuked** these parents, these inconsiderate parents who wanted Jesus to bless their children. How dare these parents think so little of Jesus' time that they presume to flood him with their foul smelling kids. No doubt the disciples concluded that Jesus was far too busy for such nonsense. Taking up so much time on kids would put them behind schedule. Jesus had preaching, teaching, and healing to do; important stuff. Jesus was about changing lives, not changing diapers. God was doing great things through Jesus and there was no time to waste on runny-nosed kids, especially infants who aren't even aware of what was happening to them. It was easy for the disciples to belittle the little's. But Jesus would have nothing of it.

## Jesus Commands That We Help Them To Him

When Jesus saw what his disciples were doing, he corrected them. Mark tells us that Jesus became "**indignant**." This means that Jesus became angry with them because they were treating the parents and children unfairly.

### (Luke 18:16 ESV)

*<sup>16</sup> But Jesus called them [i.e. the disciples] to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."*

Jesus called a huddle with the disciples. He commanded his disciples that children should be **allowed to come to him**. They were **not to be hindered** in any way. Not only were the disciples to grant children access to Jesus, but they were to see to it that there was no hinderance to their coming to Jesus.

Jesus had time for children. Jesus became angry when children were prevented from coming to him. He straightened out this error quickly. Children were not an obstruction to his goal, they were part of it. Little people were not a distraction from his focus, they became his focus. "*Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them.*" Jesus enjoyed having the children come to him. They were not a burden, they were a blessing. It was Jesus' intention to minister to little children.

Jesus was unique in this regard. The behavior of the disciples reveal the contemporary attitude toward children. Yes, the disciples would have said that children were a blessing, but they were to be seen and not heard. They were to be attended to, but they were not a priority. The big people were most important, next came the little people. This is why the disciples so quickly shooed away these mothers and their babies. The disciples didn't have time for children because their culture didn't have time for children. Not so with Jesus. Jesus loved children and he had stern warnings for those who would harm them.

### Matthew 18:6 (ESV)

6 "... whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Jesus loves children and gives breathtaking warnings for those who would prevent little ones from believing in Jesus or cause them to sin. One who harms a little life, ought to have his life taken from him. Jesus values the faith and trust a little child would so freely put in him. It is better to be drowned in the sea, than lead children into sin or disbelief. Why does Jesus get so upset when people damage the faith of little ones?

### (Luke 18:16 ESV)

<sup>16</sup> But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

The reason children are to be allowed to come to him and not hindered is, "**for to such belongs the kingdom of God.**" Jesus does not say that all children are automatically in the kingdom of God, but rather, "to such people who are like children, belongs the kingdom of God." What about children should we embrace if we are to enter into heaven? What does "such" mean in this instance?

## Do Not Trust In Your Own Righteousness

First of all, being like a child means not trusting in your own righteousness. That's the point of the parable that Jesus told immediately before this incident with the children (Lk. 18:9-14). He told the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. Luke tells us that Jesus intentionally aimed this parable at "*those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous*" (Lk. 18:9).

In the parable, a Pharisee and a tax collector both went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee was happy with his own righteousness and was happy to compare himself to those worse than him in order to make himself look better. The tax collector was exactly the opposite. He wouldn't even lift up his head when he prayed, but confessed his sins before God and asked for forgiveness. He begged for mercy, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" Jesus said this man, the tax collector, went home justified while the Pharisee did not (v.14). The tax collector knew he had no righteousness of his own to commend himself to God. However, the Pharisee believed he was righteous before God because of his own deeds, thus he failed to ask for forgiveness of his sins.

Children have nothing to offer. They are completely dependent upon others to help them and provide for them. Children are not productive. They do not produce their own righteousness. If anyone would enter the kingdom of heaven, he must trust in a righteousness not his own. He knows there is nothing he has done or could do that would gain him entrance into heaven. He is not trusting in his own deeds, but he is trusting in the deeds of another. He is trusting in the

righteous deeds of Jesus. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people who do not trust in their own righteousness, but rather in the righteousness that only God can give.

## Humble Yourself Before God

Secondly, Jesus connects this lack of trust in self-righteousness with humility. In the final verse of this parable, Jesus says,

**(Luke 18:14 ESV)**

*<sup>14</sup> "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

The person who does not trust in his own righteousness will humble himself before God. He will not hold his head high in the presence of God. Rather he bows down low and will not look up. He knows his sins have disqualified him from the kingdom of heaven, but yet he still comes to God to receive a blessing. He knows he does not deserve heaven, but he still comes to Jesus to receive the blessing of having the required righteousness given to him as a gift.

Children in Scripture are often equated with the lowly, the humble. Humble people are not afraid of asking for help when they need it. When a child needs help, he or she will ask for it. The kingdom of heaven is only open to those who understand that they need help in order to enter it. Only those who are like children will be humble enough to come to Jesus and ask for help. Proud people will not ask for help because it demonstrates their own weakness. The kingdom of heaven does not belong to proud people, but rather to the humble.

## There Are Soul-Saving Lessons to Be Learned from Children

Jesus now makes an amazing statement. He states that there are soul-saving lessons that can be learned by paying attention to children.

**(Luke 18:17 ESV)**

*<sup>17</sup> "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*

There will be some who miss the kingdom of heaven because they will not receive it like a child. Children trust easily and naturally. They believe that those who are caring for them have their best in mind. Children trust that their parents will take care of them. We must have this kind of faith in God. We must trust him. We must believe that he knows what is best for us. We must have faith in him and never doubt that he will provide for us. We must be content to stand before God in a place of complete dependence upon him and not trusting in ourselves. Children are content to be carried by mom & dad, not because they're lazy, but because they do not possess the endurance or the stamina of their parents. No one will walk

himself into the kingdom of God. We must be carried. All who come to Jesus will be carried into eternity. But those who refuse to be carried by Jesus, will not receive the kingdom of God.

**Mark 10:16 (ESV)**

*<sup>16</sup> And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.*

The children who came to Jesus were taken up into his arms and blessed. He hugged them, prayed for them, and laid his healing hands on them and blessed them. What a wonderful picture of being near Jesus. All who come to him will be taken up in his arms and blessed by him. This is a picture of salvation. We come to him and he receives us. He takes us up in his arms and carries us into eternity with him.

## Conclusion

Jesus loved children and he was not put off by spending time with them. We need people like this who will serve the children of this church. We need help in the nursery, children, and youth. This is a place you could be a blessing. We need new workers to step up and help. We need help over the summer and we need longer term help through the ministry year next year.

We have workers who have been faithfully serving for decades in these areas of ministry and need a break. We need new people to step up and help. We need people who are not trusting in their own ability, but rather will trust in the strength the Lord will provide. We need people who are humble and not proud. We need people who will not look down on ministry to children. We need workers who will not think of ministry to children and youth as some begrudging burden to be endured, but rather as a calling to be joyfully embraced. Not as some painful duty, but as a pleasant devotion.

We need people who will commit to consistently pray for our ministries to the next generation. We need people who will consistently pray for babies, toddlers, school aged children, youth, and young adults.