

Mark 10:13-16 The King Belongs to Me Falls OPC PM November 13, 2022

A professor gave his students the question that was going to be on the test. The exact question! In advance of the test! Not only that, but the professor gave the students the right answer to that question. The professor told the students how he wanted the question answered on that test. This was the legitimate way that the professor decided to teach and to test. Wouldn't you know it, some of the students still got the answer wrong on the test!

In verse 13, we find the disciples getting it wrong. How could Jesus the rabbi have prepared them more thoroughly? Yet His students still got it wrong. Here we find the disciples rebuking young parents for bringing young children to Jesus. The disciples have already forgotten the recent lesson from Mark 9, in which Jesus taught His disciples how to be great by dying to self, (v.30-32), by serving others, (v.33-35), and by caring for little people. The teaching illustration of Jesus in chapter 9:36, was to put a child in the middle of the disciples, Jesus hugged the child, and said to His disciples, "*Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me...*"

Just a little while later, in today's passage, the disciples failed the test on the Kingdom from their rabbi. When the disciples rebuked a family, any child could have objected to the disciples, hey don't you remember what Jesus taught you about this? **The King belongs to me, because He was given to me as a gift!**

1. Access to Jesus is a gift; bringing people to Jesus is a service. (v.13)

What was happening in verse 13 was Dads and Moms, were bringing children to Jesus. Why? "*That [Jesus] might touch them.*" This is not a touch for a healing. The children were not sick. We read over in the Gospel of Matthew, "*that [Jesus] might lay His hands on [the children] and pray.*" Every parent wants the blessing of God on their new baby!

It does not surprise us that the parents were bringing their children to Jesus. These parents recognized God's grace in Jesus, and they trusted Jesus.

What surprises us in verse 13 is how the disciples had an opportunity to receive children, and instead of receiving the children, the disciples rejected them.

The disciples saw it as their job to restrict access to Jesus.

Isn't this another replay of Mark 9:38 – which was right after Jesus taught them about receiving children in His name – when we read, "*Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.*"

What about the poor people who were demon possessed? The disciples only cared about their exclusive power to cast out demons, and did not want to share that.

What about the children? The disciples only cared about themselves. Jesus cared about the children, because He came to give the children access to Him. Jesus saw that the parents were serving their children by bringing the children to Jesus. The problem was not the parents. The problem was not the children. The problem was not

Jesus being too busy and unavailable for the children. The problem was the disciples not learning what the kingdom is like, because they did not learn what the king was like! The disciples did not understand who the King was here to serve.

2. Blocking people from Jesus is a serious sin that incurs His wrath. (v. 13b-14)

The object of a person's anger reveals the person. The fact that Jesus got angry at His disciples shows the compassion of Jesus for children. The love of Jesus extends beyond children, and so the lesson about the kingdom extends beyond children. Jesus had compassion for all people who are helpless, vulnerable, and powerless.

The word "indignant" described the response of Jesus toward His own disciples! It was a strong verb. Jesus was very angry with His own disciples. Does that surprise you? Shouldn't Jesus be patient with His disciples, and reserve his anger for only the Pharisees? But that is the point. The disciples had become like the Pharisees! The disciples were misrepresenting the very character of God and His kingdom! They were communicating to families that this is what Jesus is like – He has no time for children or for little people! The message could not be more wrong! The results could not be more damaging!

No wonder the Master was so deeply moved.

The disciples viewed their own action as exercising their authority by rebuking the families. Jesus viewed the action of the disciples as a complete distortion of the Kingdom of God!

To deal with the situation, Jesus made two clear statements about the beauty of the Kingdom, to counteract the distortion caused by the actions of the disciples.

Verse 14 contains the first statement of Jesus about the beauty of the Kingdom, "*Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*"

Here Jesus corrected the bad situation by correcting His disciples. In this statement, Jesus communicated the opposite of what the disciples had communicated. The disciples wanted the children to go away and to be kept away from Jesus. Meanwhile, Jesus urged the children to be brought to Him. This is a complete reversal. Shall the children leave or stay? The statement of Jesus was the antithesis of the beliefs of His own disciples!

This statement does not say that the characteristics of children have a spiritual parallel. This statement does not say that if this spiritual parallel is present in your life, then the kingdom of God belongs to you. No. That is what Jesus will next say in His second statement, in verse 15. But here in verse 14, that is not what Jesus said.

Rather, here in verse 14, Jesus made a statement that is logically prior to that, and a statement with more radical significance. Regarding the kingdom, Jesus was saying, I am The King! Therefore, who should know better about the values of the kingdom of God than Me, the King? The King would later in this same chapter, say

in Mark 10:45, the central verse to the whole book, that His purpose in coming was not to be served, but to serve. But here in verse 14, The King declared which people that He came to serve. He came to serve little people, including children. He declared that therefore he came in order to work on behalf of the children and little people. The Kingdom of God belongs to these children and all sorts of insignificant people who are similar to these children. Since the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these children, then it follows logically that the King of that Kingdom belongs these children!

To put it succinctly, Jesus was saying, I belong to these children!

How dare you as My disciples prevent Kingdom children from access to Me?

3. My King gave Himself for me and to me, so I get all His blessings too! (v.15-16)

Verse 15 contains the second statement Jesus made about the beauty of the Kingdom, *“Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, shall not enter it.”*

Here is where Jesus broadened out the lesson to non-children who must have characteristics of children.

How does a child receive a gift? As a gift. With no questions.

How does an adult receive a gift? Oh, you shouldn't have. I did not get you anything. Can I pay you for this? I'll have to keep an eye out for something you like.

Adults are always trying to earn and pay and equalize and participate differently than simply receiving.

Children understand that gifts are gifts. Unmerited gifts are okay with children, because they have nothing with which to pay for it anyway, and no merits to offer.

If we do not receive the kingdom that way, the child's way, we will never have a part in the kingdom of God!

Listen to the beautiful conclusion of this passage in verse 16, *“And [Jesus] took [the children] in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them.”*

What did those children do to earn that blessing of being literally picked up and loved by that Savior? Nothing.

Helplessness. Dependent. That is how children approach life. That is how believers approach life in the kingdom.

Look what groups of people in the Gospel of Mark has failed. The religious leaders, the family, the crowd, and the disciples. Only those sick people helplessly needing to be healed by Jesus have burst through into the realm of self-abandoning trust that is needed. The sick people, and now a second group – small children. The sick and the children have understood how to enter the kingdom. In the Book of Mark, the sick have received healing from Jesus. The children have received blessing from Jesus.

In the classic Hymn Rock of Ages, we sing this truth, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress; helpless, look to Thee for grace.”

Matthew 18:3-4, *“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

SI – Let me try to illustrate. In a city street on a windowsill of a house, gold pieces were piled up by the owner of the house for those passersby to receive as a gift. There was a sign that read, “Take one.” All day long city people passed by, read the sign and thinking like skeptical adults, “Nothing is free.” “What’s the catch?” “This is some sort of scam.” “This fellow cannot fool me.” No one took a gold piece all day long. Not a single person. They all thought it was a trap. Too good to be true. We would end up paying for it. We would be accused of theft. No one gives out gifts that extravagantly. Evening came, and the owner of the house and the owner of the gold pieces was about to collect his gold pieces for the night, and remove his sign. But just before he did, the owner noticed a child who was just coming by, and seeing the gold, and reading the sign. Calmly, without the least hesitation, the child took one gold piece, and walked away with one gold piece, a big smile, and a big skip in his step!

That is how we need to receive the kingdom. We are supposed to receive the gift of the kingdom of God like a child receives an extravagant gift.

We are supposed say to ourselves, with a smile, “My King gave Himself for me and to me, so I get all His blessings too!” Score! Good for me!

How does a child receive a gift? With simplicity, and with unassuming humility.

The child can receive a gift, as the gift is intended!

That is how we are to receive the kingdom of God, and indeed the King Himself. Jesus says I am Your King, and we say, great, thank you.

Oh, and Jesus, you belong to Me now!

A child is entirely trusting. Total trust is the center of a child’s existence. So must it be for us. A child cannot earn his place in his home, and neither can we in the kingdom. A child cannot produce, force, or make his place in his home, and neither can we in the kingdom.

In our passage we are show the picture of a man holding a baby. Now take that picture, and rewind 30 years. When Jesus was a baby, there was a man holding Him! The man was Simeon. Luke 2:28 says that as a little child, *“[Jesus] came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, [Simeon] took [the boy Jesus] up in [Simeon’s] arms...!”* A man holding a baby, but Jesus was the baby!

Now let's go back to the Gospel of Mark, and let's fast forward 30 years to the time of our study where Jesus is now the man holding a different child in his arms.

Now let's remember why Jesus came in the first place? Why did Jesus come to earth as a baby and grow up as a man? What is the mission of Jesus? Mark 10:45, "...*the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*" Jesus came to serve us. Jesus came to give to us. EVERYTHING IS A GIFT. The kingdom of God is ours by grace, not earned by our qualifications or our actions. Christ gives the kingdom as He chooses. Christ the King has chosen to give access to His Kingdom to these children, who were brought in faith by their parents.

This serving of Jesus points us to the cross of Christ.

Paul wrote in Romans 5:2, "*Through [Christ] we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*"

How did Jesus serve us and give us access to the Kingdom?

What happened to those hands of Jesus that we read about in our passage tonight? The same hands that held the children, were soon nailed to the cross. The same hands that blessed the children, were the hands that were pierced. In order for Jesus to receive those children, He had to commit to going to the cross and allowing those same hands to be nailed there in order to bring that kingdom blessing to those children.

Concluding applications:

1. Rejoice like a kid, that the kingdom of God is a Kingdom of grace that is given to you.

Jesus even gives us the faith. Ephesians 2:8 says that faith is the gift of God.

The children in our passage were small enough and young enough that Jesus could take them up in his arms, as he hugged them. What a delightful picture and a pleasing image for us to consider – Jesus taking very young children, picking them up, and hugging them and blessing them one by one, one after the other. What an impressive and comforting and memorable scene. No wonder Matthew, Mark, and Luke each record this incident and these statements of our Savior! It is an inviting expression of the kingdom of God. Children are a part of the kingdom! Children are a part of the church! Children belong here. Children belong to Jesus.

Think of those families in this wonderful scene. Now fast forward a few years, after Jesus had died, risen, and ascended back to heaven. These same children were growing older. What could the parents say to them about spiritual things, about the nature of the Kingdom of God? The parents could say - when you, my child, were younger, just a little child, Jesus Himself picked you up, and put his Hands on you and prayed a blessing on you from God the Father. Already then, you were the recipient of God's tender love. God has been with you ever since, and He will never leave you and never forsake you. The King belongs to you, and you to Him!

Hebrews 4:16, “*Let us...with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” We have a great high priest! We have a throne of grace! We have mercy to help us. We have grace in time of need! We ought to receive these things as gifts, like a little child. Cool. Thank you! I have Jesus, and so I have all His blessings, too!

2 Peter 1:11, “... *there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

2. The King belongs to me means that His love for children becomes our love for children. Since Jesus was willing to confront His own disciples, we believe that Jesus would confront anyone, when it came to protecting and welcoming children. We have a responsibility to see the kingdom as the King does, which means seeing children as the King sees them. We join our King in developing a love and passion for children. Because we love children, we will do everything necessary to protect them. We get angry enough to take action when children are threatened. The love of Jesus is what leads to the indignation of Jesus. The love of Christians leads us to imitate our Savior – to develop the indignation and proper actions of Christians to protect His precious ones.

3. The King belongs to me means that He loves me enough to correct me. Look at verse 14. “*Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them.*” Jesus spoke that to whom? To His disciples. That statement was a passionate correction of His disciples, who were sending the children away from Jesus. Jesus loved the disciples by correcting the disciples. That is the action in our passage. The fact that King Jesus belongs to you means that Jesus loves you enough to correct you! Being corrected is a blessing. Being corrected is a blessing. Being corrected is a blessing. That does not mean it is pleasant. When we are doing wrong, we need correction! Jesus did this for His disciples when needed. Back in Mark 9:39, Jesus corrected His disciples by saying, ‘do not stop the man casting out demons!’ Here in chapter 10, Jesus corrected His disciples by saying, ‘do not prevent children from coming to God.’ *Remember, the passage is not just about children!* Jesus makes sure you have access to Him! Jesus protects Your ability to come to Christ. Who can enter the kingdom of God? Only if you are like a child in certain ways. Not everyone can enter the kingdom of God! The kingdom of God belongs to persons who approach Jesus in a certain way. It belongs to humble people who approach Jesus asking for the gift of access to Him!