

### INTRODUCTION

- Several weeks since in Luke, in part of ministry where Jesus has revealed His purpose and headed toward Jerusalem
- The controversies are heating up, increased opposition, and Luke includes various events and parables in which Jesus is focusing on the nature of the Kingdom of God and entering into it
- Previously saw parable of tax collector and Pharisee, seeing humble recognition of the need for grace rather than self-righteousness
- Now we come to one of the most beloved passages in Scripture regarding Jesus' blessing of the children
- As we approach this passage, I am aware (and so should you) that we are stepping into a text around which surrounds great controversy within the Christian church; the controversy mostly concerns the salvation of children, and especially related as a proof-text used in various ways by Paedo-Baptists (explain)
- I have the challenge of avoiding two extremes, on the one hand making the passage say beyond what it actually does, and on the other diminishing the text to end up saying nothing

### EXPOSITION

#### I. THE SITUATION DESCRIBED [parallel accounts in Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16]

- the exact time and place are not given to us

##### ***Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them***

- 1.) *Who was brought to Jesus?* Gk. Brephos = ranging from an unborn to a very young child
    - Matthew and Mark include (Gk. paidion) a larger term likely referring to children under age of puberty
  - 2.) *Who was bringing?* Not told exactly who, but assume that it was likely parents, family or close friends
  - 3.) *Who were they were brought to?* Jesus
  - 4.) *What was their purpose in bringing them?* That He might touch them.
    - Matthew 19:13 adds "put [his] hands on them" and "pray". Mark 10:13 tells us that when the discourse is over He takes them into His arms, puts His hands on them, and blesses them. This was the whole purpose, to ask that Jesus, in visible and physical form, pray for God's blessing on them. It is believed that this was a common Jewish tradition, to take one's children to a Rabbi, elder, or teacher to ask them to pray for God's blessing on them.
- This reminds us of several things. First, our children are in need of the Lord Jesus. They, like us, are fallen in Adam and are not to be assumed to be in a state of grace. We should bring them, in those ways possible now, into the presence of our Savior.
  - We do so by fostering a sense of God's universal presence. We do so by reading the Word of God with them, praying with them and for them. We do so by bringing them into the special worship of His House in the church.
  - Though we do not now know Christ according to the flesh, we do have access to Him and should bring our children to Him to plead that He would lay His hands on them and bless them.
 

*All are fallen; all have a tendency to sin, and none but Jesus can save them. Little children, too, are in a world of sickness and death, and in the beginning of life it is proper to invoke on them the blessing of the Savior. - Barnes*

#### II. THE DISCIPLES' REBUKE

- The tense Greek verbs indicates that the process was happening, there were those who actually were being blessed, and at some point the disciples see what is happening, then intrude and stop them.
- We are told that ***they rebuked them*** (Gk. epitimaō = command, give order, rebuke, scold). The rebuke was given to the ones who were carrying or bringing the young children to Jesus.
- For a reason not fully explained, the disciples told the people to stop it. Why did they respond in this way?
- Assuming they knew of the practice of bringing children to spiritual leaders to pray for blessing, why would they have stopped them?
- I suggest that it was their frequent misunderstanding of the Kingdom of God which brought this about. They expected and desired Jesus to be a powerful King and conqueror. He was an important man, and much too busy to deal with children. He was going to help overthrow the Roman government, and be established as the great miraculous warrior.
- He was to give great teachings and mysterious which little children wouldn't understand. He therefore needed to be surrounded by great men, not women and old people and little children.
- A similar things happens in Matthew 15:23 in relation to a Canaanite (Gentile) woman. A like occasion is found in Luke 18:39 regarding a blind man.

#### III. JESUS' RESPONSE

- The Lord directly addresses the disciples, but it is born out of inner thoughts and emotions
- Mark adds that he was "greatly displeased" (Gk. aganakteō = indignant against what one judges as wrong)
- He did not look with indifference, or even with a cold correction, but a deep seated indignation at an injustice
- Jesus ***called them*** to Him (Gk. proskaleomai = summons, call to self for a meeting). He would do so for correction.

- **And said let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them**
- Just what is meant? Technically, the children were being brought, not so much trying to get to Him. Because of the term that is used for little child, it is likely that they didn't comprehend the Gospel. If this is the case (for at least some), then what is meant is that they should stop being a hindrance to those means (i.e. the parents/family) which God uses to be a blessing to the children.
- If we assume that there were some who at least in simple terms able to understand the Gospel (need to repent and trust the Lord Jesus), then they were not to stand in their way by saying they were too young or didn't understand enough.
- So the disciples, rebuked out of the righteous indication of Christ, must immediately stop what they are doing
- We are then given the reason: **for of such is the kingdom of God**
- Again we ask the question, what does this mean?" This has been answered in various ways. Some see it as a universal declaration of the salvation of infants and small children.
- The term "of such" (Gk. poioutos = of such, similar, like this, of this kind).

**Illustration:** Baseball tryouts. Statement that of such great players will be made is not a universal statement that all will become great players, but that it is out of the pool of young players that great ones will arise.

- This points us away from a universal declaration of all children being already in the Kingdom, but rather a statement that it is just of this kind that are the Kingdom. This is a statement of encouragement. Of such is the Kingdom
- Jesus then takes that principle as relating to children and applies it universally: **whoever**
- The statement he makes has the verbal marker **Assuredly I say to you** which indicates a statement of our Lord which is going to be hard to understand or accept. All He says is true, but this prefaces things that cut across the grain of common ideas.
- **He says whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.**
- Greatness in the Kingdom in the mind of the disciples (as seen throughout the Gospels) is thought in worldly terms. Jesus turns that on its head, and speaks of how the greatest will be servants of all.
- This is another description of what it means to enter the Kingdom, not based on worldly wisdom, power, or greatness, but child-like qualities.  
*...instead of the children first becoming like them, they must themselves become like the children - JFB*
- The question is what just **what kind of childlike qualities** is Jesus referring to? Here are some clues:
  - 1.) 1Pet2:2 – a passionate desire for God's Word
  - 2.) Ps131:2 – a quiet contentment with God's will
  - 3.) Mk10:15 – a humble reception of God's gift
    - unlike the self-sufficient, a child is not too proud or ashamed to receive a gift
  - 4.) 1Cor14:20 – a relative "innocence" regarding "malice" (Gk. kakia = depravity, vice, wickedness); not "mature" in evil
- Mk10:13 tells us that after this correction **He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them**

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### APPLICATION

What do we learn from **those who were bringing**? An example of our desires for those outside of Christ, especially our children.

*Those who are themselves blessed in Christ should desire to have their children also blessed in him, and should hereby testify the true honour they have for Christ, by their making use of him, and the true love they have for their children, by their concern about their souls. – Matthew Henry*

- We hinder our children by living one way in church, and another in the home. We hinder them when we don't put them in the path of God's blessing by praying with them, reading Scripture to them, helping them to learn in church.
- They did not bring the children to baptism (Jesus didn't do so, and the disciples didn't understand it that way) but to Christ.
- We should not easily be put off, even when things discourage us.
- The special blessing of those who teach our children. Children's Sunday School isn't a babysitting service, but a great privilege.

What do we learn **from the disciples**? It is a great aggravation to the Lord Jesus to do those things which hinder the lost coming to Him. Even true disciples can really blow it, and do things wrongly.

What do we learn from the **Lord Jesus**? His great willingness to save those who come with child-likeness to Him.

*[a child's] faith is very simple; it does not understand mysteries and controversies, but it believes what it is told upon the authority of God's Word. ... just the very way in which a child receives Christ, is the way in which you must receive Christ if you would be saved. You who know so much that you know too much; you who have big brains; you who are always thinking, and have tendency to criticism, and perhaps skepticism, you must come and receive the gospel as a little child. - Spurgeon*