

Children and the Kingdom?

Matthew 19:13-15; 18:1-5

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- The blessing of having children and grandchildren.
 - **Psalm 127:3-4**-- *"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate."*
 - **Proverbs 17:6**-- *"Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father."*
- Many in our society today view children not as a blessing, but rather as a burden.
- In the time of Christ, children were considered insignificant, a nuisance. Spending time with children was deemed a "waste of time"
 - **m. Abot 3:11**-- *"Morning sleep, midday wine, chattering with children, and tarrying in places where men of the common people assembled, destroys a man."*
- Just like Jesus elevated the place of women in society, so He elevates the position and value of children by making a vital connection between children and the kingdom.

Children and the Kingdom?

- **Matthew 19:13-15**-- *"Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there."*
- **Mark 10:13-16**-- *"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 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. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them."*
- **Luke 18:15-17**-- *"Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."*

A. The Scene

1. **Parents were bringing their children to Jesus for Him to pray for them and bless them.**
 - a. The ages of the children were anywhere from infants to toddlers.
 - b. The Talmud taught Jewish parents to bring their children to a respected Rabbi for prayer and blessing
 - c. Jesus was known for His compassion and willingness to meet the needs of even the lowliest in society.
 - d. These parents were hoping that their children would grow up to be strong in the law, faithful in marriage, and known for their good works.
 - e. The problem: They kept coming, a continual stream of parents bringing their children to Jesus
2. **Jesus' disciples rebuke these parents, seeking to keep them away from Jesus. Why? Possible reasons:**
 - a. Spending time with children was considered to be a "waste of time".
 - b. Jesus has more important people to see and more important things to do than to bless children

- c. Perhaps they wanted to shield Jesus from endless interruptions.
 - d. Jesus' attention to these parents was cutting in on their private time with Him
3. **Jesus gets angry with His disciples and rebukes them.**
- **Mark 10:14--** *"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.'"*
- a. Anger is not necessarily sinful.
 - b. Possible reasons Jesus is angry with His disciples.
 - 1) His love for children
 - 2) His love for parents
 - 3) His belief that no one, not even the littlest baby, is outside the care and love of God,
 - 4) His disciples had no right to make decisions for Christ as to who could or could not approach Him.
 - 5) Stated reason: *"For of such is the kingdom of heaven."*

B. The Connection between Children and the Kingdom?

1. **The faith of the parents in bringing their children to Jesus?**
 - a. **Position Stated**
 - 1) They contend that the children are "in" the kingdom.
 - 2) Jesus does not view these children as "little heathen" who are living outside the realm of salvation until by an act of their own, they would "join the church". But rather as objects of God's love, and thus as children of adult believers, they now belong to God's church.
 - 3) Thus the sign of covenant, infant baptism, should not be withheld from them.
 - 4) Infant baptism means different things to different branches of Christianity.
 - 5) For all, there is a belief that the parents' faith somehow contributes to or brings about the salvation of the child.
 - 6) Later on, a child may need to confirm their faith, but at the moment of baptism as an infant they are somehow "in" the kingdom, connected to the church, based on the faith of their parents.
 - b. **Position Challenged**
 - 1) Nothing in the text indicates that Jesus is isolating "elect children" from others who are "non elect."
 - 2) Nothing in the text indicates that these parents sought out Jesus because they believed in Him as Savior and Messiah.
 - 3) No mention of water in the text. Infant baptism is not found in Scripture.
 - 4) No mention of the child's faith
 - 5) Text does not say that these children are "in" the kingdom, but rather "of such is the kingdom"
2. **The Child-like Faith that is needed to enter the kingdom of God.**
 - **Mark 10:15, Luke 18:17--** *"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."*
 - a. **What is "Child-like Faith"?**
 - **Matthew 18:1-5--** *"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.'"*
 - 1) The Setting
 - a) The On-going Debate as to who is the greatest.

- **Matthew 20:21b**-- *“Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”*
- b) Jesus taught them that the “greatest” is the servant of all.
- **Matthew 20:25-26**-- *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.”*
 - **Matthew 23:11**-- *“But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.”*
- c) Jesus’ object lesson: A little child
- **Matthew 18:2**-- *“Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them.”*
- 2) Main lesson: If you want to enter the kingdom, you must be converted and become like a little child.
- **Matthew 18:3**-- *“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”*
- b. **What is conversion?**
- 1) Conversion involves repentance of sin.
- **Matthew 4:17**-- *“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”*
- 2) Conversion involves turning from one’s sin and self-effort to trusting Jesus Christ, and Him alone for one’s salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and new life in Christ.
- **2 Corinthians 5:21**-- *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*
 - **1 Peter 3:18**-- *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”*
 - **Titus 3:5-7**-- *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*
 - **Ephesians 2:8-9**-- *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*
- 3) Conversion involves a change of life’s direction.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:9-10**-- *“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*
- c. **To be converted requires people to become like children.** Child-like faith. Those who humble themselves will be the greatest in the kingdom.
- **Matthew 18:4**-- *“whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*
- d. **Nicodemus and child-like faith**
- **John 3:2**-- *“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”*
 - **John 3:3**-- *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”*