

As a little Child

Mark 10:13-22

13 Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 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. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 16 And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

This opening account reminds me of a trip that many parents have taken with their children to visit Santa at the mall... There is a long line of Parents holding their eager children. Santa has helpers to guide them and entertain them on their way to his lap. At the end of the line is a booth where you enter to be seated on his lap and then you let him know all your wishes for Christmas. In a similar way you may picture the procession of parents herding their children to the Lord Jesus. But the comparison ends there. These parents are not indulging their children in holiday make believe. They are not making play. They have a serious mission in mind. They sought a spiritual blessing for their children. Another dissimilarity is that while the Santa at the mall has helpers, this Savior did not. In fact his disciples were literally standing outside the house rebuking those trying to bring these children to him.

I'm sure they thought they were doing Jesus a favor. After all an important one like him should not be fatigued by kissing babies. He wasn't a politician. He was the messiah. Whatever their reasoning, it seems rather amazing considering that just recently Jesus had carefully explained to them that the essence of serving, which he called them to do, demanded the humble care of children (**Mark 9:37**).

When our Lord Jesus he discovered the kind of help they were providing him he was indignant. *"Let the little children come to me." - "Stop getting in their way."*

Then the Lord Jesus uses this event to teach his disciples and to teach us. He is always teaching because He knows we need it.

Now there is one major lesson to be drawn from this account, which is:

Childlikeness is the essential nature for anyone who is to enter into God's Kingdom.

V. 14b let them come to me... *"for of such is the kingdom of God"* That is to say, *these little children express the essential nature of those in my kingdom.*

Vs. 15 *"I tell you truthfully anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall never enter it."*

The Greek reads even more emphatically - **BY NO MEANS SHALL ENTER INTO IT.** (In fact there is no other way to enter into the Kingdom of God than by receiving it in the manner of a little child.)

Now let us read verses 17-22 and the story of the rich young ruler as they illustrate what childlike faith is not.

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" 18 So Jesus

said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" ²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." ²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." ²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

After rebuking and teaching the disciples Jesus takes the children in his arms and enthusiastically blesses them. Then he leaves the house and goes into the street. At this point a Young man comes to him. At first glance things look very promising. This young man has a sense of felt need that has created a great urgency in him. In **vs 17** he comes running up to Jesus. This young man also expresses sincere passion on the issue. He falls at Jesus' feet. And He is concerned about the right thing, "How can I inherit eternal life?" What is more important than that? Add to this that he is wealthy, and a leader in the community and I'd say that to the eyes of the disciples he appears to be a much more valuable character than the little children they had tried to shew away. In fact now they may have been working to push the parents and the children to one side so that the Lord Jesus could properly address the plea of this man of significant status. If they were fishers of men than this was a big fish they wanted to catch.

But from this point everything goes downhill for this young man. He will fail to produce those necessary qualities of a Child in coming to Jesus.

On the way to explaining this lesson of the Lord Jesus from our text let me first answer 4 questions... and then let me make 3 observations.

Question #1 - WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Answer: It is a broad term and favorite one of Lord. He uses it to refer to the state of life that He has come to bring to all people. It is a state of life that may be experienced here on earth but will, in its ultimate and sweetest perfections, be experienced in an uninterrupted here after; It is a new state of life to be tasted in time and feasted upon in eternity.

This state of life is for me now, it starts in my heart, if I receive it, but it will reach a grand climax of fullness in heaven-in an eternity with the Lord Jesus. And you receive this state of life when you receive God's Son Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. **John 1:12** "But as many as received him (Jesus), to those who believe in His name (Lord and Saviour) to them He gave the power or right to become the children of God."

Question #2 - What is this state of life like?

Answer: It is like an enchanting Kingdom in which God, a just and good God is the king. In this Kingdom there is security for all its members, there are riches beyond understanding, and best of

all there is unhindered access to its benevolent King. NOW remember this is not just for the future but for today. People may receive and enjoy this kingdom life here and now.

Heb. 4:16 tells us that we who are a part of this kingdom *may come boldly to the throne of*

grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in our times of need.

And there is more:

- In this Kingdom then and even now there is **peace beyond comprehension. Philippians 4:7** says "*and the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" I
- It is a kingdom of love poured out, **Romans. 5:5** Paul says, "*...God has Poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.*" I
- It is a kingdom of knowledge made perfect. **2 Cor 4: 6** says that *God, who made light to shine out of darkness, shines into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's own glory as it is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.* I
- It is a Kingdom of unbroken Fellowship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In **I John 1:3,4** the Apostle John boast of a fellowship we may have with the Father and the Son that will complete our joy. I
- It then it is also a Kingdom of Joy that is indescribable. **I Peter 1:8** "*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. For you are receiving the goal of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*" O
- This is a Kingdom, not of things made better, but made totally new. **2 Cor. 5:17** *if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things have passed away and behold everything has been made new* T

All this is brought to the heart of each individual receiving the Son and someday the one who has this Kingdom in their heart will be brought to heaven where that Kingdom will be experienced in all its fullness.

Question #3 - Sounds great but what do I do to enter into this Kingdom or have this Kingdom enter into me?

Answer - You cannot do anything to gain it but receive it as a little child.

Question #4 - You say... I have received it in that way once and even enjoyed a taste of it for a season but why am I no longer enjoying the sense of its possession now?

Answer - You will always have to receive it as a little child. Once having taken up the kingdom in a childlike manner you'll have to continue to come to it and engage it in that same childlike way every single day. Our kids often are eager to grow up and taken on adult task and undertakings...but just here where we live in this kingdom at the contact point of being childlike... we are going to have to stay childlike.

This is what Jesus is teaching and it is a stunning truth. The statement is astonishing in every way. We would like to think, as many do, that a child must receive the Kingdom

like an adult, but absolutely, the reverse is true. The child is the model, not the man. **The adult must receive the Kingdom like a Baby; for the child models for us the very essence of faith.**

Now let me make 3 observations regarding the essence of Child like faith - please note that at the core of each of these observations is the overarching quality of complete trust.

Observation #1 - Little Children Deify their Parents. We are like gods to them.

Children begin in childhood thinking too highly of us and end in their teen years not thinking highly enough. But for a brief moment in time. We are like deity to them. They are in awe of us in a way

that is although completely unrealistic from our view and yet totally reasonable from theirs. We gave them life, we give them life, we sustain their life. To the child we, for a moment, define the whole sphere of their existence. We even set the standard of what they should be like.

Ex. Of little boy shaving next to his daddy.

Ex. Or of little girl combing her hair next to her mommy.

Ex. And as we grow up our parents underscore a very divine concept that their words are what matters. They say clean up your room. We say, "Why who is coming over." They say, "Clean up your room because I said so." That settles it... The Parent has spoken.

You see in order to receive this kingdom you must know that the one you are coming to is God. You must know Him in that way and you must embrace Him as the one who defines the sphere of your existence. He it is who sets the standard for what your are to be like. He said and says to you "*be ye Holy as I am Holy.*" When the Lord Jesus came he came speaking as our primary authority. He said, "*you have heard it said... but I say to you...*" In other words *my words are what matter.* Now in order to enter the Kingdom you must let God always be God. He must be the beginning and end of your reference for life.

In light of this look how the Rich Young Ruler responded:

He failed to recognize the Deity of Christ-or the great spiritual nature of God exuding from Him. The Lord Jesus not revealed in full His Divinity at this time and yet He is asking at this time that they come to Him in just that way. He is to be the life. He is to be the bread they need. He is to be the water they need to drink. He is to be the absolute starting point of eternity. "He says, "***I am the resurrection and the life...if anyone come unto me I will in no wise cast Him out.***" (John 11:25, John 6:37)

He called Jesus good and Jesus attempts to show him that he misunderstood the implications of the word. The man didn't recognize the good that was before him. "*Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*"¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, "*Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.* To Child like faith Christ is more than a good teacher... He is God.

The young ruler thought he had kept all the commandment. This is easy to think unless you are aware that the holy standard for all those commandments is standing right in front of you. Then you may have to rethink how well you kept them. The man was measuring himself against himself or others and thought he looked quite good. He was not holding it

up against the good that was God and the God that was right before him. He didn't see Him through the eyes of a child.

In God's presence Moses, the giver of the law fell in the dust, Isaiah cried out woe is me, but the young man says with a shrug, "*Been there done that.*"

Observation #2 - Little Children are content to be completely dependent upon their parents.

A kid's life is great primarily because they live with so much trust. It is an assumed trust. They have not even thought to think otherwise. They so trust in their parents they are not anxious or concerned about anything else.

What does a Baby have anyhow? Nothing except this mysterious all encompassing trust in its parent. They have yet to learn that they may depend on their own intellect. Or that they may rest on their own personal strengths and abilities. They have yet to discover that they can rest in the somewhat, significantly powerful dollar. That's where adults place their faith and their trust, but not children.

We trust in our wisdom. We trust in our abilities. We trust in our properties or possessions. We have these 3 in some combination as our essential points of confidence and trust against the future. They are the things that put us at ease... these three things we need to have to feel some sense of confidence. Not kids. The Lord says, "To receive my kingdom you must trust only in me. Not in your wisdom. Not in your ability or power. Not in your wealth or possessions." God taught the same thing through Jeremiah. **Jeremiah 9:23,24** "*Let not the wise man delight in his wisdom. Let not the powerful man delight in his power. Let not the man with many things delight in his things but let him who delights delight in this; that he understands and knows me - the Lord who practices lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on the earth, for in these things I delight says the Lord.*"

How did the Rich Young Ruler React?

He was unwilling to place himself in complete dependence upon the Lord Jesus.

He trusted in his knowledge. He asked, "Give me some special knowledge. You are a wise teacher, let me in on your secret."

He trusted in his power. He asked, "What great deed can I do to inherit the kingdom of God. What is it that I can do to make this happen?"

He trusted and rested in his possessions. More than anything else this held him back. The Lord Jesus saw it and put his finger upon it. "*Sell all you have and come and follow me.*" "*Throw everything else aside and put all your trust and hope in me alone.*" **How childlike and how seemingly impossible for this intelligent, powerful, rich young man.**

Please don't think that the Lord was giving this man a work to do... That he was giving him some kind of activity to do to be saved. No really Jesus was just saying, "You must trust me only for your eternal life." He isn't calling the man to an action

but to an act of child like faith. We say, "Salvation is a free gift but God can only give it to empty hands." The empty hands of a little child reaching up for all its need with all its trust.

Unfortunately this man was not prepared to come to the Kingdom as a little child was he? He had trust in his own ideas, his own abilities, his own things and so they held him back from the one thing he really needed.

Observation #3 - A little Child's faith is evidenced by their unconscious celebration of life under the shadow of their parents.

Sit and watch a little child at play when it is in the security of its home. He will laugh and giggle and then cry and call out for food. She'll carry on a running conversation with herself in some unknown language of babbles and little spit bubbles. They will tumble and stumble into all kinds of new discoveries and positions. This child will cry when the parent shows displeasure in their behavior but in a blink of an eye will be laughing with bright eyes even as the tears are standing on its cheek. This celebration of life goes on in the heart of a child for some time. Here is what you are seeing... Someone who is blessedly not self aware. They are wonderfully unconscious of themselves.

I am not saying that children are not selfish but they are not consumed with finding themselves. They are not caught up in their own self analysis. They are free to be what they are because they are completely dependent on someone else. They are not vacillating and self probingly stunted... they live in a world that is not their own making and they trust the creator of that world.

Jesus does not encourage a journey inward to somehow find your inner child. He is not recommending some odd form of regressive therapy of the soul here. Quite the opposite. He is calling for you and me to so trust him and cast our trust on him that like little children we may almost forget ourselves altogether. Instead he would have us just celebrate life under the confidence of a life completely entrusted into his hands and into his protecting and securing promise and presence. THIS KIND OF CELEBRATORY LIFE IS EVIDENCE OF CHILDLIKE FAITH!

How did the Rich Young Ruler Act?

He wasn't able to celebrate in Christ very presence. He trusted in other things and looked to his contracts with possessions. He could not end them or would not. He had great possessions and these possessions had him. He went away sad.

Instead of celebrating life in following Jesus, he chose the depreciating celebration of physical wealth.

Review: Childlike faith is trust: Trust in God as God. Trust that rises up in contented dependence upon God and not upon your wisdom, abilities or possessions. It is a trust that therefore frees you from self consciousness to celebrate life in God's presence and enjoy the Kingdom that becomes yours.

The disciples will be stunned by this... If that rich, powerful (morally and socially) and intelligent man cannot be saved... who can? If it is impossible for him where does that leave us? Jesus answer... It leaves you needing to become childlike. Child with man it is impossible. With God nothing is impossible. Be children. Trust in me. What you can't do for yourself. I can do for you.