

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Let the Children Come to Me.*"

We are working our way verse-by-verse through Luke's Gospel, and we find ourselves at **Luke 18:15**. We spent a few weeks talking about why babies go to heaven to build up to these verses.

If you are listening to this sermon and you have some questions about babies going to heaven, more than likely they were answered in the previous sermons. For example, if you say:

- *Can babies choose between good and evil?*
- *How can babies be saved without believing?*
- *Are there any saved babies in the Bible?*
- *What about original sin?*

These questions – and more – were answered in the previous messages.

Sunday mornings I am always looking for new people. As they are looking around the church one of the most common things I hear is, "I love these pews, and especially the color."

Just kidding. But I do frequently hear, "Look at all these children."

I am thrilled that we have so many children in the church. We love them. As [John MacArthur says](#), "*We are tenderly disposed to little ones, drawn to them, to their fragile character, to be protectors of them, to enjoy their unconditional affection and love, and the sheer joy that comes from their delightful presence. But more than just what comes to us by virtue of their life in this world, we are concerned about their eternal souls. We concern ourselves with their place in the kingdom of God. And the passage before us is critical to understanding how God views little ones in relation to His kingdom.*"

With that in mind, look at Luke 18:15 to begin this familiar account...

Luke 18:15 Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

Jewish parents commonly sought out prominent rabbis, which Jesus was, to bless their infants.

Not only did the disciples try to stop the parents from bringing their children, they rebuked them.

This is not one of the shining moments for the disciples. If you ever wonder if God can use you, think of some of some of the things the disciples did, and you will be encouraged he can. When I look at the behavior of the disciples at times, I'm encouraged that God can use me.

Look how Jesus responds...

Luke 18:16 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.

It looks like the disciples rebuked the parents, but then Jesus rebuked the disciples.

In the parallel account in Mark's gospel, it says...

Mark 10:14 When Jesus saw [what the disciples did], HE WAS INDIGNANT...

Why was he indignant?

Based on what he said, it seems to be because the disciples were destroying a spiritual truth he was trying to communicate, which could be summed up like this...

Infants were supposed to be able to come to him to Jesus physically, because it pictures infants being able to come to him spiritually ...not just in this life but in the next. Preventing infants from being brought to him could communicate they don't have access to him.

Jesus made it clear infants have access to him with the words, "To such belongs the kingdom of God."

The words **to such** are incredibly important. In the NIV, NASB, and Amplified, it says **such as these**.

These words show Jesus wasn't only saying the kingdom belongs to the infants brought to him. The kingdom also belongs to EVERY infant.ⁱ

And this brings us to lesson one...

Lesson One: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me," because (Part One) the kingdom of God belongs to them.

I'm not alone in interpreting this as a guarantee of babies' salvation...

When preaching on this passage [John MacArthur said](#), "I am convinced that the Scripture is absolutely clear that when babies die and children die before reaching the point of personal accountability, they go to heaven. And I have collected all that material in a book called [Safe in The Arms of God](#)."

I have a copy of this book, which I referenced during these sermons. I would say if you desire to understand infant salvation deeper than what I have taught, I highly recommend this book.

John Calvin said, "[This] passage gives Kingdom citizenship to both children and those who are like children. [They] have not yet any understanding to desire His blessing but when they are presented to Him, He gently and kindly receives them and dedicates them to the Father by a solemn act of blessing. It would be cruel to exclude that age from the grace of redemption. It is an irreligious audacity to drive from Christ's fold those whom He held in His arms and shut the door on them as strangers when He did not wish to forbid them."ⁱⁱ

Charles Spurgeon said, "I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them!"ⁱⁱⁱ

In the parallel account in Mark's gospel, it says Jesus blessed them...

Mark 10:16 [Jesus] took them in his arms AND BLESSED THEM...

Let me share two points about this...

First, Jesus only blessed the saved, which makes sense. How blessed could people really be if they went to hell? How bad it would look if Jesus blessed people and then they didn't go to heaven?

Second, Jesus blessed these babies, and if paedobaptism, or infant baptism, was biblical, we would also expect him to command the parents to have them baptized. But he didn't.

Now, the question is, WHY would the kingdom of God belong to infants? What is so commendable about them that they get to receive the greatest possible gift?

Let's answer this by thinking about commendable things about infants. Here are some things that came to mind for me...

First, infants can be very loving. Typically, they are happy to be held, hugged, kissed, sometimes doing these things even at very young ages.

We have been working on getting George to give kisses...versus bites. He's awkward. He doesn't seem to know how to pucker his lips. We believe he will improve as he gets older.

But the point is, infants can be loving even at young ages.

Second, infants are forgiving. Even if infants are angry because they didn't get what they wanted, they don't hold grudges. When you return to an infant a little while later they are not upset with you about whatever it is they didn't get. They do not keep a record of wrongs or harbor bitterness.^{iv}

Third, infants are very trusting, and trust is synonymous with faith.

Infants are so trusting that as they get older we must teach them to be LESS trusting. We say things like, *"Don't talk to strangers. You can't trust everyone."*

Fourth, infants have sincere motives. When they smile, laugh, or giggle, it is completely genuine. They do it for no other reason than the joy they are experiencing.

They don't worry about how they appear to others. They don't try to impress, which leads to the fifth thing I was thinking about them...

The absence of pride. Let me back up to get a little momentum into this discussion...

Last night some Mormon missionaries came to our house. They said they were walking around and they went to someone's house and the person said, "Hey, this guy over here as a pastor, you should go talk to him." I'm thankful they were pointed my way. My boys joined me for what I thought was a wonderful conversation with them.

I tried to follow Paul's pattern with the Athenians in Acts 17, which involves:

- Praising the things you can, in this case how zealous these young men were to leave their families and labor on these mission trips.
- Establishing some similarities between us, in this case our belief in God and the Bible
- I showed them pictures of their Mormon friends I met with as I told them about the ministry God has given me to them.

And then we moved to a discussion of the gospel because it was getting late and I wanted to make sure we covered that. I asked the young men what they would say if they came to a house and the people wanted to be saved. What would the gospel sound like that they would preach to them?

One of the young men said, "We are saved by grace through faith and works."

When I disagreed with that, the other missionary said, "No, we don't believe that. We believe we are saved by grace through faith."

Then he read some verses from the book of Mormon that said we are saved by grace...AFTER we have worked as hard as we can.

I shared Ephesians 2:8-9 with them a few times...

Ephesians 2:8 By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is NOT YOUR OWN DOING; it is the gift of God, 9 NOT A RESULT OF WORKS, so that no one may boast.

Paul says our salvation is not our own doing and not a result of our works.^v

But as we get older we can start to become proud and believe we contributed something to our salvation.

But infants don't have this problem...and this brings us to the next part of lesson one...

Lesson One: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me," because (Part Two) they exemplify salvation apart from works.

Considering there is no effort or merit on our parts to be saved, infants exemplify this incredibly well. They are the best example of the gospel's recipients. They demonstrate divine grace and unconditional election.

When I use the term unconditional election, I'm not even using it in a Calvinist versus Arminian way. I am using it in the most generic way possible to describe people being elected independently of anything they have done or could do...and you can't find a better example than babies.

- They have done nothing to be elected...yet they are.
- They have done nothing to deserve the kingdom of heaven...yet it belongs to them.

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Look back at Luke 18:9...

Luke 18:9 He also told this parable TO SOME WHO TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES THAT THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS, and treated others with contempt:

We know from when we went over this parable that Jesus preached it to the religious leaders. They were those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

Because they believed the kingdom of God belonged to those who were good enough, the idea that infants could be saved was detestable to them.

When Jesus held these infants and said the kingdom belonged to them, it flew in the face of the religious leaders' teaching that the kingdom of God belonged to those who did enough.

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Along these lines, some people struggle with infant salvation. They say things like, "What has an infant done TO be saved?"

But if we understand the gospel, what have any of us done to be saved?

Nothing.

We haven't done more to be saved than infants. Or another way to say it is, infants haven't done less than us to be saved.

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Think about the Beatitudes...

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are THE POOR IN SPIRIT, for THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

You hear the similarity...

In Luke 18 Jesus said the kingdom of God belongs to children. Here he says the kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit.

The poor in spirit know they have nothing with which they could earn their salvation. They don't trust in their own righteousness.

And so, it is fitting that the kingdom of God belongs to infants. They don't think they are spiritually rich.^{vi}

We must get older to become proud and believe we deserve to go to heaven.

Jonathan Edwards said, "*A true Christian is poor in spirit, and MORE LIKE A LITTLE CHILD, and more disposed to a universal lowliness of behavior.*"^{vii}

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Now after making the point that the kingdom of God belongs to children and those like them, Jesus presents the other side of this...

The kingdom of God does NOT belong to people who are not like children...

Luke 18:17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

If we are not like infants we don't even get to enter the kingdom. The Kingdom of God so clearly belongs to infants, adults must become like them to receive the kingdom themselves!

And this brings us to the last part of lesson one...

Lesson One: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me," because (Part Three) the kingdom of God belongs to people like them.

Mark your spot in Luke and briefly turn to Matthew 18:1.^{viii}

This is not the parallel account. The parallel account of Jesus blessing the little children in Matthew's gospel is in the next chapter in verses 13 through 15.

I wanted to look at these verses because Jesus makes it even clearer that we should become like children, and he explains what that means. Look at verse one...

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Another low point for the disciples.

Matthew 18:2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them 3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and BECOME LIKE CHILDREN, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Because there is nothing more important than entering the kingdom of God, we should ask ourselves what it is about children that we must become like to enter the kingdom.

We get the answer in the next verse...

Matthew 18:4 Whoever humbles himself LIKE THIS CHILD is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

This is one more reason the kingdom belongs to infants. They have a wonderful humility.

And you can understand why humility is needed to enter the kingdom. It requires acknowledging two things...

First, "I am a sinner."

This world is filled with people who do not have the humility to say these four words. There are countless people going to hell because they cannot confess their sinfulness.

Second, "I cannot save myself."

The world is also filled with people who do not have the humility to acknowledge they can't save themselves. There are countless proud people believing the most common lie, "I am a good person who deserves to go to heaven."

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Turn back to Luke 18:17.

There is an incredibly important word in this verse, and it is **receive**...

Luke 18:17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not RECEIVE the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

Think of the way infants receive things. It does not matter what you hand an infant, they receive it...and then it often goes in their mouths.

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Now let's look at this spiritually...

Children receive spiritual truths as readily as they receive physical objects. Here's what I mean...

Tell any child, "Jesus loves you." Every child receives this spiritual truth.

Tell any child, "Jesus wants to be your Savior." No child will ever disagree with you.

One time, when Rhea was younger, she learned that some people were not Christians, and she could not believe it. She couldn't understand why people wouldn't receive salvation.

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Salvation imagery is even bound up in the word receive.

For example, if I say, "What is something you receive?" Most of you are going to say, "A gift."

And that's what salvation is...

Romans 3:24 [We] are justified by his grace AS A GIFT.

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is death, but THE FREE GIFT OF GOD is eternal life.

Ephesians 2:9 By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is THE GIFT OF GOD, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

When Jesus was speaking to the woman at the well...

John 4:10 Jesus [said], “If you **KNEW THE GIFT OF GOD**, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

And this is Jesus’s point: we should receive the gift of salvation as readily as infants receive whatever is given to them.^{ix}

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Now, let’s shift gears for a moment...

In conversations about babies going to heaven, one of the common questions is, “Are there any other people in this category of special salvation?”

I told you last week that there probably is, and that is, the mentally handicapped. And this brings us to lesson two...

Lesson Two: The kingdom of God *probably* also belongs to the mentally handicapped.

I added the word probably in italics because I don’t have the scriptural support for the mentally handicapped going to heaven like I do with babies...but I do think it is *probably* the case. And I will provide some verses, so you know why I feel this way...

Last week I shared this verse with you...

1 Timothy 4:10 God...is the Savior of all people, **ESPECIALLY OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE.**

It is significant it says **God is the Savior of all people...ESPECIALLY those who believe**, versus **God is the Savior of all people WHO believe.**

This implies God saves some who haven’t believed. This could include everyone who, through no fault of their own, can’t make the mental assent to believe, or, in other words, are unable to exercise saving faith.

I put two groups in this category: infants AND the mentally handicapped.

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Also, Jesus said the kingdom of God belongs to those who are LIKE CHILDREN. When you ask people familiar with mentally handicapped people what they are like, what do they frequently say?

“They are like children.”

I chose to talk about the mentally handicapped in this sermon because it fits so well with Jesus’s words.

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Second, consider these verses...

1 Corinthians 1:27 God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; **28** God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.

There are two ways the word **chose** is used in the New Testament. One way is to describe those God has chosen for a special purpose. But the more common way is to describe those God has chosen for salvation...

2 Thessalonians 2:13 God **CHOSE YOU...to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.**

When **1 Corinthians 1:27-28** describes who God chooses, it could very well be describing those chosen for salvation.

But even if the verses are only about those God has chosen for a special purpose, it is hard to believe they could be chosen for a special purpose, without ending up being saved.

Sadly, our world singles out down syndrome babies to be aborted. Some parents take tests when they are pregnant to find out if they are having a down syndrome child so they can abort it.

But God could have a special place for them in heaven, Maybe some mentally handicapped people go through this life despised, but God has a glorious eternity in store for them in his presence. And this thought blesses me.

I want to share something along these lines...

When we were at Beach Camp, Katie received a message from the doctor that Hudson more than likely had down syndrome. A few weeks later Katie took a more accurate test that revealed Hudson more than likely does not have down syndrome.

But during those weeks that we thought we were having a down syndrome child we read medical literature and testimonies from people with down syndrome children to understand what it would be like for us. I also tried to find Scripture that related, and I want to pass along what I learned.

And this brings us to lesson three...

Lesson Three: Regarding disabilities, God (Part One) is sovereign over them.

Here's the context for the first verse that encouraged me. We know that Moses was reluctant to go into Egypt when God sent him. Listen to one of his objections and God's response...

Exodus 4:10 Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." 11 Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? WHO MAKES HIM MUTE, OR DEAF, OR SEEING, OR BLIND? Is it not I, the Lord?"

Although God mentioned the mute, deaf, or blind, I think it fits the spirit of the passage to include any disabilities, including children with down syndrome.

It encouraged me that if we had a down syndrome child, it would not be an accident. God is as sovereign over the disabled as the abled.

And my hope in sharing this is that you can be as encouraged by God's sovereignty as well should you ever have a disabled child, or you find yourself in the situation that you can minister to someone with a disabled child.

Here are the other verses that encouraged me...

John 9:1 [John] saw a man blind from birth. 2 [The] disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that THE WORKS OF GOD MIGHT BE DISPLAYED IN HIM."

Two things about these verses encouraged me as I thought about having a down syndrome child...

First, the disciples assumed that the man's blindness could have been a result of his parents' sin. I'm assuming many parents with a disabled children might think they did something wrong.

Katie was even doing this, because she read that a baby's likelihood for down syndrome is increased if the mother is stressed.

But Jesus quickly corrected that thinking with the disciples and I believe he would with us as well.

It encouraged me, and I hope it might encourage you as well, that if parents ever have disabled children they should never wonder if the child's disability was caused by something they did wrong.

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The second thing that encouraged me was that Jesus said God wants to use disabilities for his glory and this brings us to the next part of lesson three...

Lesson Three: Regarding disabilities, God (Part Two) wants to use them for his glory.

These verses encouraged me not just to see the child as a gift from God, but even the accompanying disability as a gift from God, because of the way he would use it.

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As Katie and I were reading about having a down syndrome child, it became evident that our lives would change, not just for a few years, but more than likely for the rest of our lives. People with down syndrome children often care for the child for the rest of its life.

There were three things I shared with Katie that I would like to pass along to all of you as well...

First, I told Katie that there was no church I can imagine wanting to bring a down syndrome child into more than this one.

Second, there are unique trials associated with having a down syndrome child, and I told Katie that there is no church family that I would rather go through those trials with than this one.

Third, I also thought that there would be wonderful ways God would use this child in our church.

Even though it seems like our 10th child probably does not have down syndrome, I just want to say that if the Lord ever chooses to bless our church family with a down syndrome child, I believe he will use that child in beautiful ways that we can't imagine.x

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Let me conclude with this...

We have spent weeks looking at why babies go to heaven. I know some people might disagree with this teaching, but I know one teaching that no sound believers disagree with...

That all adults do not go to heaven. Only those who have repented and put their faith in Christ. Only those who humbly approach God like little children will receive the Kingdom of God.

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If you have any questions or I can pray for you in any way, I'll be up front after service and it would be a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.

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ⁱ Let me briefly remind you of something we have talked about before...

Preaching the gospel sounded different throughout human history

In the Old Testament they preached the coming Messiah.

In the Gospels, the Messiah came from heaven to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. He brought the kingdom of God with him, and they preached the kingdom of God...

John the Baptist was paving the way for the Messiah...

Matthew 3:2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

He said **the kingdom of God** is at hand because He knew Jesus was bringing the kingdom of God with Him.

When Jesus came he preached...

Matthew 4:17 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

They couldn't preach the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, because he hadn't been resurrected yet.

On this side of the cross, we preach Christ's death, burial, and resurrection:

1 Corinthians 1:23 we preach Christ crucified.

The point is, preaching the gospel took on these different forms based on their relationship to Jesus's coming.

And to say that the kingdom of God belongs to infants is synonymous with saying they are saved.

ⁱⁱ John Calvin (2013). “Commentary on Matthew”, p.388, Ravenio Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Vol. 1, ch. XVI, “A Defence of Calvinism,” Passmore and Alabaster, 1897, p. 175.

^{iv} We must get older to embrace these sins. We hear stories about people, or perhaps we know people, who haven't spoken to family members for months or years because they are so angry and bitter. Relationships can be ruined over something that happened that people can't even remember.

But this doesn't happen with infants.

^v We are justified, or declared righteous, by grace through faith...

These verses don't mean that we don't do anything for the Lord, or we don't have any works. They simply mean our works haven't contributed to our salvation.

In fact, the next verse says...

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus FOR GOOD WORKS, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

So we definitely perform good works. We get saved to work for the Lord, or another way to say it is, we get saved, so the Lord can perform good works through us.

Consider these verses...

Ephesians 1:4 [God] CHOSE US (this is synonymous with election) in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

We can start thinking that perhaps God **chose**, or elected us, because of something we have done.

^{vi} The one thing you could argue is that we are saved by repenting of our sins and believing in Christ.

But this is why the previous sermons were so important. Because of those sermons we know:

- Babies are innocent
- They have not reached the age of accountability
- They have not committed sins they need to repent of
- They are unable to believe, but goes when the t God mercifully applies Christ's sacrifice to them

So there is that difference, but regarding working for or earning salvation, babies have done no more or less than us.

^{vii} This account is situated not just following the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, so we can contrast infants with the Pharisee. This account also occurs before the account with the Rich Young ruler, which we will look at next week and see someone who thought he was spiritually rich...

Luke 18 1 And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus told him to keep all the commandments perfectly, which only the proudest people would think they had done. But the rich young ruler was one of these people...

Luke 18 21 And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”

But as proud as the Pharisee and the rich young ruler look, they weren't born this way. Infants don't have the self inflated views we develop when we are older.

^{viii} Now although the verses I want to show you in Matthew are similar to the verses we are studying in Luke, they are not the same account. The parallel account of Jesus blessing the little children is in Matthew 19:13-15.

^{ix} If I need more words I could point out how Naaman serves as a picture physically of what is supposed to happen to us spiritually...

2 Kings 5:14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

We must go back to being like little children. It's almost another way of saying we must be born again!

^x Think of the glorious reality of this for Muslim and Hindu and Buddhist countries where we see so many babies dying.

The reason we I decided to teach on this was we discussed God's command for Israel to destroy all of the Canaanites and Amalekites, even their children. I submitted to you that they were a tremendous example of God's mercy, because they were the only Canaanites and Amalekites who were saved. They were taken to be with the Lord before they embraced the wickedness of their parents that would've separated them from the Lord for eternity.