

Let them Come!

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Family: Children; Children with Jesus; Blessing; Marriage; Family: Parents / Mark 10:2–16

That the hearer would be encouraged to realize that they are even welcomed by God, no matter their age!

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction!

Families are under attack! Marriage and children are under attack. Can you imagine the scrutiny Jesus would be held under today with the words he speaks in our Gospel lesson for today...even in the church! Think about it - the sanctity of marriage isn't held in honor by many anymore...homosexual marriage, cohabitation, and divorce run rampant. The culture attacks people and organizations who oppose their views. Jesus would be attacked for his views!

Jesus has a reputation and it is well-established by this time in Mark. His miracles, His teachings showed him for who he wise - one with power and authority. People flocked to him wherever he went. His popularity soared. And so did the opposition. The hatred by the Establishment - the scribes, the Pharisees - those with political and religious power. Jesus teaches them about family, marriage, and children in our text. They asked the question after all. He told the Establishment that God brings marriages together. He urges the sanctity of marriage with his disciples!

He then teaches on the gift of Children and how even the little ones given to husbands and wives (and yes today, with rampant adultery - children conceived outside of marriage) are His Children - loved and welcomed into his family.

Scripture is clear in our text. There's no way around it.

Jesus Came For ALL...even young children!

Faithful Parents

In our text, Little Children are being brought to Jesus to receive a blessing. No doubt they are brought by their faithful parents! No doubt these children were already members of the

household of God since they were members of the faith. The boys were circumcised on the eighth day by the faithful. This was their sign and seal of faith. Yet these parents continued to bring them to Jesus. They recognized something important. The ongoing nurture of a child's faith is important - no matter if they are a day old or 18 years old or anywhere in between! They were bringing their children to be blessed by Jesus! They wanted Jesus to show them his love for them in person!

There's many a story of when faithful parents bring their youngsters to church that the toddler sees their pastor as Jesus - because of the white robe and speaking God's Word. I know I did. Little Children see the changes of the church year, from banners and paraments and vestments. They memorize the Lord's Prayer and the Creed by being in the Divine Service as they are brought by their faithful parents. I give God thanks for faithful parents!

Back to our text! Now someone didn't approve of the parents' actions. We don't know why the disciples did what they did. That's not told to us. Perhaps they thought Jesus was too busy taking care of the needs of the adults and didn't want to be bothered by these little ones who would distract him. It doesn't matter though, the disciples turned them away...and the parents kept trying to bring their children to Jesus! And by turning away the children...they were turning away the parents! How unfortunate, how sad! Jesus caught wind of this and He was not happy. Mark tells us he was indignant...he was angry! Jesus had a righteous anger and proceeded to show the disciples they are wrong! Jesus says in our text:

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"Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." 16

And for the second time in three gospel readings, Jesus takes a child into his arms! Here, this time, children are all around him! He blessed them as he laid his hands on them.

Jesus came for ALL! His life, death, and resurrection is for ALL. Many reject his grace! The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost - from the greatest of them to the least! He went to Samaritans, tax collectors, adulterers. He rejoiced over the Confession of a Roman, and here he shows how the littlest of God's lambs are precious in his sight and His Father's sight!

Unfaithful Disciples!

The disciples were far from faithful here in our text! Like many in our times, these disciples think children can't believe, that they don't matter. Some other Christian denominations point to an age of reason when children are able to have faith and belief in his name. We might even say things such as that as well in our own language. The disciples, like many today, perhaps

even you, fail to understand why Jesus came and what His Kingdom is all about. So Jesus proceeded to teach his disciples and us adults some lessons!

God's kingdom that is his gracious rule in the hearts and minds of the believers is also for the smallest, the littlest, the least...the very young. To many people faith is a matter of intellect or will...but that's not the case. It's a matter of trust in Jesus and in the promises of our gracious Father.

I never understood this completely until I became a parent. Children trust their parents, they trust them to change their diapers, clothe them, feed them, read to them. They trust their parents to take care of their needs...all because they are helpless. They can do nothing on their own...they need someone to do it for them. They can't even come to faith by themselves. That happens through a miracle...a miracle of Jesus.

Today though there are many obstacles to that faith. Children are thrown out like trash. Parents for some reason, possibly out of convenience, expedience, or some other reason determine that it would be better to terminate the life of the child in the womb! They are GOD'S REMARKABLE CREATION! As our introit for today proclaimed: "Behold, Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward." How indignant must Jesus be over these who are kept from life?

Or there are the parents who think: "I will give my child his choice of religions when he grows up. I won't do anything with him now." Or more common in the Lutheran church. "I'll give my child the choice to go to church after confirmation...after all then it's not a requirement." Or maybe, "Baptism, that does the trick, I don't have to bring my children till they behave in church or until confirmation age."

Jesus said: "Let the Little Children come NOW!" Bring them to Him...NOW! And the Holy Spirit will do as he intends - create faith in the heart of the infant, by the washing of regeneration. And then the faith is fed, just as a child needs to be fed and nurtured. The faithful Christian parent and the Church seek to nurture the child in the faith and not cast them out. The faithful parent educates a child in the way he should go. The faithful church supports the parents in their mission of bringing up their children in fear of the Lord - and not casting them out of the pews! So that when they are older they will not stray away from the Lord.

Faith of Believers

Not only are children part of God's kingdom through faith in him, but also, it is precisely that kind of Faith that God looks for in all of his believers! Simple, humble, trusting faith that looks only to him.

That first look that your child gave to you when he or she was born! By nature, we are unable to save ourselves, no matter our age. We are truly dependent solely on God's grace; we can't

make a decision for Jesus, but the Spirit comes and creates faith. This faith, it's a gift of God! It's a gift in every child, parent, grandparent, church member, who believes. It is through this faith that we believe and attain the kingdom of God.

English Standard Version Chapter 10

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

Yet, their still is original sin. Children to receive the guilt of their parents by nature. They are still selfish little creatures...and they need salvation. Jesus said, "Let them come."

They receive salvation by the Holy Spirit, through baptism. Jesus said, "Let them come." They too receive forgiveness through the Words of Absolution. Jesus said, "Let them come."

Jesus told those disciples to not prevent the children from coming to Jesus. He was angry with his disciples, with anyone who would prevent the youngest of Believers from receiving the Blessings of Jesus. These blessings come in baptism, in the divine service, in Sunday School, and in other places such as the home. Yet that day they are received in baptism, we point to the cross...where he proclaimed the sanctity of human life and the sanctity of spiritual life for all even to you...a Child of God, no matter your age! And he picks you up in his arms.

I encourage you all, even when you have failed and are forgiven in the name of Jesus, to welcome the little Children, do not hinder them. Be an encouragement to Christian parents as they bring their children to receive the blessings of God.

God graciously welcomes and gives gifts to Children of all ages...whether they are infants, toddlers, elementary age, teenagers, young adult, mid age adults or the elderly. He graciously welcomes even you! And your faith is valid...it's valid because of Jesus. So, whether they are infants who cry in church or the elderly... "Let the children come! and do not hinder them!" For our heavenly Father desires to bless you all every day, and he does exactly that!

In Jesus Name. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.