

Mark 10:13-16
“Let the Little Children Come to Me”
July 29th, 2018

When I was at a previous church I had a little girl who called me “God”. For months, on Sunday mornings, she would greet me when she saw me by saying, “Hi! God!” I and her parents time and again would remind her that I wasn’t God but only worked for God.

But in her 3 year old mind since I worked in the church and she saw me every Sunday in the church I must be “God”. She would sometimes come up and sit with me next to the pulpit when I preached. She was well behaved, but just not sitting where her parents preferred. It was amazing how fast she could slip away from them.

As youth pastor I used to visit youth who were new to the youth group at their homes or apartments. I remember visiting one young woman who was talking on the phone when she flung open the door to her apartment. The first words out of her mouth were, “O my God!” Again I said, “No, I just work for him.”

The truth of the matter is, we as Christians all work for God, and our love, words and actions are the best way for children to meet God. The point is we are vitally important in bringing children into a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is our job to introduce them to Him; so that they can enter the Kingdom of God.

You and I must be able to explain and live out Mark 1:15, “**Jesus said, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’**” Sounds like last week’s sermon topic. It is. And it is Jesus’ message, which he has given to us to hand on to our children. Where Jesus is, there is the Kingdom of God. For us to enter the Kingdom of God, we must come into a relationship with Jesus, and if Jesus is in us then wherever we go Jesus is there with us.

A story is told of a little girl who asked her mom, “*Is Jesus in us?*”
The mom replied, “Yes.”

The little girl thought a moment and asked her mom again, “Is Jesus the Light of the world?”

Again her mom replied, “Yes.” To which the little girl said, “If Jesus is in us and Jesus is the Light of the world, shouldn’t he shine through?”
Yes, Yes indeed.



What we see in our Bible story today is Jesus offering a relationship with him... even to little children. When we receive Jesus we are received into the Kingdom.

I use this illustration from the DNA of the Bible many times, because I believe, visually, it is the easiest way to understand what goes on when we come into a relationship with Jesus.

Relationship	>	Responsibility
Covenant	>	Kingdom
Savior	>	Lord

When we receive Jesus as our Savior we need to also make him our Lord and follow him in obedience. Today we heard Mary Ann reaffirm her commitment to Jesus as Savior and Lord, which we do every time we bring in a new member.

Now here is the situation in Jesus’ day, which made what the disciples did to the children more normal than what Jesus did.

Jesus was on the way to the cross, and was under a lot of stress from his impending death, as well as his ongoing teaching and healing ministry. Some think the disciples sensed this; so they tried to keep the children away from Jesus for as you know they are noisy and distracting!

But also more importantly in Jesus’ day most children were seen as having no value at all. Why bother Jesus with something that is a

nothing. In fact children and babies were seen of such low value that if someone had a baby they didn't want, they would simply leave it outside to die of exposure.

The early Christian Church, though, was known for rescuing and raising such babies. They were totally prolife as we say today. They would have loved the mission of Family First which we support.

Anyway, the disciples blocked the children and their parents from Jesus for a variety of reasons. Jesus found out and indignantly called for the children to come to him. He said, "He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,

for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

A lot of people read a lot of stuff into our scripture today about the characteristics of a child thinking these are what Jesus had in mind.

Things like: **humility, simplicity, honesty, trusting, dependent and receptive**. These indeed are qualities of a child of God in the Kingdom of God, but the quality Jesus was highlighting, that the children he blessed had, was that of **receptivity**.

Remember he said, "**you must RECEIVE the Kingdom of God like a little child.**" The children Jesus blessed received his grace without any achievements on their own. In our scripture they were completely passive and dependent and even seen as a useless annoyance.

They were brought to Jesus by "**people**", most probably their parents. They weren't directly spoken to by the disciples. The disciples spoke over them to "**the people who brought them...**" Jesus spoke to the disciples, and then finally he gathered the children in his arms who simply received what God in Christ had to offer: blessings and love!!

That is what this scripture is telling us we need to do to enter the Kingdom of God. To enter the Kingdom of God is to start a relationship with Jesus for **Jesus Christ is the Kingdom of God**. We must simply accept the gift that is offered. Not because we earned it. Not because we achieved it. Not because we did some good works. Not because we deserved it. Not because we are of some great worth.



We enter the Kingdom of God, a relationship with God in Christ by accepting it; by receiving the free gift that is offered. This gift is an offer that is given without conditions or dependent on us in any way.

We as Jesus' disciples today can learn from those first disciples to not only get out of the way of children/youth/adults coming to Jesus, but we need to be the ones ushering them into Jesus' presence for Jesus' blessing.

So, what can we do? Well let me talk to the **children and youth** gathered here first. Remember it is through a relationship, a friendship with Jesus that we enter into the Kingdom of God to live forever with God. Here are some things you can do to make that friendship stronger.

Right now do what you are doing: **worship God** with the people of God and your family. Along with that go to Sunday School. **Second, pray** to God whenever you can. **Third, read the Bible**, the Word of God or listen to it being read to you. **Fourth, help others** when you can,. We Christians call this service. **Fifth**, when asked why you help others let them know it is because Jesus is your friend, and asks you to help others.

Parents do what the parents did that brought the children to Jesus. **Bring your children** to worship and Sunday School. **Pray** with your children at meals giving thanks to God. Pray with them at night before you put them to bed. **Read the Bible** to them and with them. **Let them see you giving** to the church and serving others. They need to see you

living your faith, because if you don't lead them to faith someone else will lead them to faith in something else.

A story is told of a mother, who was a Doctor, taking her kindergarten child to school. They were late and in a hurry so they stopped by McDonalds to get some breakfast. As they drove along the little girl asked her mom if she could play with her stethoscope. The mom was touched and thrilled thinking she wants to follow in my footsteps.

Well the little girl put the stethoscope on and then holding the end spoke into stethoscope, "Welcome to McDonalds can I take your order?"



Our children need to see us living our faith!

Now **church**, I want you to continue doing what you are doing for our children and youth. The **support** you show them is fantastic! What is absolutely beautiful is how much you love on our young people every Sunday when they walk in the door.

Barbara and Shirley have taught Sunday School here for years and appreciate your support. The nursery is moving into bigger facilities when we start our new building.

Church you also have shown great support for our youth and the work of Valerie. You have helped with VBS and Terrific Tuesday programs. The UMM have given a scholarship to Kourtney Hotchkiss and the Mission Committee has supported her as our intern here this summer.

The Mission Committee in so many ways has shown support for Children and Youth introducing them to Christ and serving their needs: Family First, Snak Pak, Agua Prieta School supplies, Hearts Apart, Agua Prieta scholarships and the celebration of the day of learning.

The list goes on. You live the love and service of others every day of the year and invite our children and youth into that service.

Grandparents and Great Grandparents your life and love and witness for Jesus is a very important avenue to bringing our children to God. Fred Roger, aka “Mr. Rogers” in a short paragraph describes the importance his Grandfather had on him in terms of building in him a desire and ability to teach. Grandparents have an impact on grandchildren that many others can’t. Please don’t be afraid to **bring up God and the things of God with them.**

Finally, we are all children of God and we need to bring each other into the presence of God, into the kingdom into relationship with Jesus Christ. In verse 15 Jesus said, **“Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”**

We, each one of us, must receive the gift of a relationship with Jesus as openly, readily and trustingly as a child who sings “Jesus Loves me this I know” with all their heart and believes without a doubt that Jesus does love them.



Indeed my friends, Jesus loves you! God in Christ loves you. Will you receive that gift as trustingly as a child knowing that as you do you will enter the Kingdom of God and life forever more.

Let us pray. Lord, I trust that there is someone here today who would like to receive your gift of relationship and faith. So if that is you here today pray in your hearts this prayer and then speak with our Stephen minister following the service. If you want to receive the gift of a relationship with Jesus pray with me...

God, I accept your offer of a relationship and entrance into the Kingdom of God. I thank you that you love me and have forgiven all my sins because of Jesus’ sacrifice. Help me make Jesus not only my Savior but also my Lord. Amen