

A Child of the King - Matthew 18:1-14

Introduction: One of the most frequent ways God's people are described is as children: In God's Word we are called children of promise, children of the day, children of the light, beloved children, dear children, children of God and little children.

But Matthew writes his Gospel in terms of Jesus as the King of Kings. So, I'm going to borrow the title from the well-loved song "*A Child of the King*" as the title for today's message.

As God's children, we enjoy the blessings of His forever family. But in our humanity, we are weak and immature children.

I came across this and I want to read it to you because it describes us as immature children. It's called, **The Toddler's Creed:**

If I like and want it, it's mine. If I saw it first, it's mine. If it's in my hand, it's mine. If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine. If I can take it away from you, it's mine. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine. If it looks like mine, it's mine. If it's mine, it will never belong to anybody else, no matter what. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine. If it's broken, it's yours.

That's just about the way we think and act sometimes. However, in our text for today, Jesus compares a little child to His children. Let's look at four aspects of believers as children of the King. First:

1. Becoming a Child of the King (1-4).

Children want to be noticed. That's natural because you have a small, simple-minded, and immature person living in a world of giant, intellectual, and polished adults. No wonder their actions cry out "*Hey, look down here!*" "*What about me?*" "*Notice me!*"

As Jesus taught His disciples about the coming of His kingdom, they probably dreamed of a world of Jewish domination. And in that kingdom, I'm sure each one thought, "*What about me? Where do I stand? Surely Jesus has a special place for me.*" **Luke 9:46 (NIV)** says, "*An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.*" So, to settle the argument, they came to Jesus and asked, "*Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*"

Peter said, "*Look at me Jesus. I'm the greatest because I was the first to call Jesus the Christ. I was the one who got out of the boat and walk on water.*" John reminded him that later, Jesus also called him the devil, and he almost drowned. He claimed, "*But Jesus likes me best.*" Andrew said, "*But, I was the one who found*

Him first.” Matthew said *“But I gave up the most to follow Jesus.”* Each of them had reasons for believing he was the greatest.

Can’t you hear the bragging and arguing going on? It sounds a lot like what goes on today: *“Look how much I gave!” “But I’m at church more than you!” “Sure, but I do more.” “Oh yeah, My granddaddy built this church!”* When you think about it, none of us are immune from acting like immature children. So, to teach these immature and prideful disciples a lesson, Jesus, as He had done on several occasions, called for a little child to come and sit on His lap.

So as little children, let us gather around too and hear the words of Jesus. It is all about becoming as a little child, but in an entirely different manner.

Jesus said that unless we *“change”* and become *“like little children”* we will *“never enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Jesus meant that unless we come to God in faith just as this child had come into His arms, we cannot be saved. *“Change”* comes from the Greek word *“strepho,”* meaning *“to twist, turn around or reverse.”*

In other words, Jesus was saying that although the disciples had placed their faith in Christ for salvation, they also needed to turn around their thinking. They needed to change from haughtiness to humility; from boasting to brokenness; from pride to repentance; from self-centeredness to sacrifice.

The world says to be great, you must rise up to greatness. Jesus says, to be great, you must go down in humility. A.W. Tozer said it this way, *“A real Christian empties himself in order to be full; admits he is wrong so he can be declared right; goes down in order to get up; is strongest when he is weakest; richest when he is poorest and happiest when he feels the worst. He dies so he can live; forsakes in order to have; gives away so he can keep.”*

So, how does a person become a child of God? By humbling himself. If you are saved, you came to the place where you recognized and admitted your sinfulness. You also recognized your complete inability to do anything about your condition. In humility, like a *“little child”* you called out to God for salvation. However, those who will be greatest in God’s kingdom must continue to humble themselves. Second, Jesus describes the danger of:

2. Offending a Child of the King (5-9).

Here Jesus speaks of causing Christians to sin. The Greek word is *“skandalizo,”* which means *“to cause to fall.”* God has serious judgment for anyone who is responsible for causing a believer to sin. Jesus said it would

be *"better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."* Imagine the feeling of guilt that came over the disciples when they heard this. They had just caused each other to be envious, jealous and angry.

There are several ways we can do the same thing. One way is by acting ungodly before fellow Christians. Eve tempted Adam. Aaron caused Israel to sin by molding and worshipping a golden calf. David committed adultery and murder. When new believers see or hear of believers acting ugly, their temptation to sin becomes stronger. Their trust and confidence becomes weaker. Their faith becomes shakier.

Other way of contributing to the delinquency of a Christian minor is by simply being a bad example. Engaging in some of the same sins as unbelievers is a major stumbling block. Paul said to Timothy in **1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV)** *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."*

Another way to cause others to stumble is by failing to lead them in the right path. **Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)** says, *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."*

The old movie, *"It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World"* is about a bunch of strangers who are trying to find a secret treasure. They all set out to find it and it's a mad scramble to outdo, outwit, and out scheme each other to be the first to find the treasure. At one point, one of them switches a road sign, which causes the rest to head in the wrong direction, and its hours before they realize it. How many times have we led others down the wrong path either by a bad example or by absence of a good example?

As parents we would do anything to protect our children. We would give our lives for theirs. We set boundaries around them. We keep a watchful eye on their friends. All because we want to lead them in the right direction. God wants the same for His children. And He doesn't need other Christians steering them the wrong way.

In vs. 8-9, Jesus uses hyperbolic language to drive home the point that we must do whatever is necessary to remove sin from our lives and to keep from causing others to sin.

Now, it's not totally possible for the amputation of limbs or the extraction of eyes to keep us from sinning - we would still find ways to commit sin. But Jesus is saying that nothing is so valuable, so important, and so necessary that it should keep us from pursuing a life of obedience to Christ. This is a call for drastic action against sin.

Only unbelievers are in danger of hell. However, I believe we all can understand from this teaching the seriousness with which God looks upon sin and the consequences of leading others to sin.

Next, Jesus describes:

3. Mistreating a Child of the King (10)

Kids can be cruel. If one kid is overweight, has bad acne, or big ears, others will often be mean and cruel to them. I've been on both ends. I've been the recipient of cruel remarks, and I've been the one making them. Let me tell you, neither feeling is pleasant.

Jesus gives a command in vs. 10 for Christians not to mistreat other Christians. With that *"little child"* probably still on His knee, He said, *"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones."* He's talking about mistreating a fellow Christian. It's never right to look down our arrogant noses at any other believer. In God's kingdom, we are equal. We are never to mistreat another Christian. But, unfortunately, it happens. How? Let me give you several examples. We mistreat other believers when we:

A. Become Spirituality Arrogant. It's wonderful thing to find your freedom in Christ. But, once we find it, it's wrong to flaunt it and look down other Christians who may not be on the same spiritual plain. **1 Peter 2:16 (NIV)** says, *"Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God."* We can also mistreat other believers when we:

B. Play Favorites. James 2:9 (NIV) *"But if you show favoritism, you sin."* I'm not talking about having special friends. I'm referring to accepting one type of person and, and shunning another. Too many believers are driven by appearances.

We can also mistreat other believers when we:

C. Refuse to Help Others in Need. 1 John 3:17-18 (NIV) says, *"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."* Enough said! We can also mistreat other believers when we:

D. Disregard a Wounded Christian. When a Christian falls into sin, have you ever said, *"He knew better and now he's getting what he deserves"*? That's what I mean by disregarding them. When we turn our noses up, talk about them behind their back, or put them down before others, it's the same as finishing off a wounded Christian. They're already down and facing the consequences of their sin, so let's not be guilty of adding to

their misery. **Gal. 6:1-2 (NIV)** says, “*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*” Remember any of us could fall at any time. We can also mistreat other believers when we:

E. Take Advantage of Others. In 1 Thess.4:6 Paul warns that “*no one should wrong his brother.*” “Wrong” means to *step over the line...to take advantage of.* We are to love, serve, pray for, help, and encourage one another but never, ever take advantage of one another. Finally, we see Jesus’ instructions on:

4. Caring For a Child of the King (11-13).

Although some of the oldest manuscripts omit v.11, its truth is not omitted. “*The Son of man came to save what was lost.*” This is Jesus’ mission statement. And it reminds us that every believer is one with Christ. Vs. 5 says, “*Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.*” And in **Luke 10:16 (NIV)** the Lord says, “*He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.*” Therefore to reject any Christian is to reject the Lord Himself.

It’s so easy to look down on people who are not like us. But Jesus never does. He loves them and cares for them.

As a shepherd is concerned for the one sheep out of 100 that is lost, so Jesus, the good shepherd, is concerned for us when we stray. He seeks us, treats our wounds and brings us back to fold.

Even if we are careless, foolish, stubborn and rebellious, God’s love for us is still the same. He doesn’t merely wait for us to return, but he actively and diligently pursues us!

Conclusion: When little Jessica fell down the well shaft in Midland, Texas several years ago, everyone was focused on her rescue. We looked on with great interest as her rescuers carefully dug for those long hours trying to free that little girl. As long as they could hear her breathing and talking, they knew there was hope, and it spurred them on to dig even more diligently. And when she was finally rescued, everyone rejoiced. Now, was that little girl more important than any other child? No, but her need was great, and that’s why they wouldn’t quit. That’s the care Jesus has for His children. We’re never too low, never too far away, never too lost for Him to care.

An angry man once rushed through a museum in Amsterdam and slashed Rembrandt's famous painting *Nightwatch*. A short time later, another man slipped into St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome with a hammer and

began to smash one of Michelangelo's beautiful sculptures. Two cherished works of art were severely damaged. What did officials do? Throw them out? No! They brought in experts, who worked with the utmost care and precision to restore the treasures. By His sovereign grace, God restores even the most ruined lives. Why? Because we are His treasure. Because He cares for His children. Because we are Children of the King.

“No one ever cared for me like Jesus. No one else has been so kind and true. No one else could take the sin and darkness from me. Oh, how much He cares for you.” Why? “I’m a Child of the King. A Child of the King! With Jesus my Savior, I’m a Child of the King.”