

Bringing Your Children to Jesus – Mt. 19:13-15, Mk 10:13-16

Introduction: One Sunday a father said to his son, *"You better hurry and get ready for Sunday School. We're all ready and we don't want to be late."* The boy tried to hurry, but then he stopped and asked, *"Dad, did you go to Sunday School when you were a boy?"* The father replied, *"Yes I did."* The boy said as he was getting dressed, *"It probably won't do me any good either!"*

This morning we're going to see what Jesus thought about children and how important it is for them to have the opportunity to know Him. Let's read Matthew 19:13-15.

Matthew 19:13-15 (NIV): ¹³*"Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. ¹⁴ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." ¹⁵ When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there."* The first thing we see is that:

1. Children Were Brought To Jesus (13)

"Then little children were brought to Jesus..." (13). It would be easy for us to assume that these children were brought to Jesus by their parents, but that is not necessarily true. If things were back then as they are now, not every parent was interested in the spiritual well-being of their children. That is why we must be sensitive to the needs of all children, not just our own.

Some parents aren't raising their kids in a Christian home. Others are just not concerned about the spiritual condition of their children. That is why some kids are dropped off at church so the church can baby-sit them. Still others just don't understand the importance of teaching their kids about Jesus while they are young. I've actually heard some parents say that they'd rather let their children decide for themselves about going to church. I wonder if they feel that way about going to school, or seeing the doctor, or cleaning their rooms? Why are some concerned about their physical and mental well-being, but not the spiritual?

But the children in our text were brought to Jesus. That's what God wants parents to do. If you don't bring them, they might never come. Secondly, we see that:

2. Jesus Wanted To Bless Them (13)

“Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them.” In Biblical times, it was common for people to bring children to a prophet or priest for them to bless their children. As a prophet of God, these folks wanted Jesus to pray for the child, and tell them how much God loved them, and give them a special blessing from God.

What kind of blessing does God want to give children? For one, He wants them to learn that Jesus loves them. At my former church, there was a lady who kept the nursery for some 30 years. And her daughter told me that every child who came in that nursery was taught to sing “Jesus Loves Me.” She didn’t teach them this song so they could learn the music, but rather so that they could learn the message. Children are never too young to learn that Jesus loves them.

Another blessing God wants to give children is the opportunity to experience a Christian environment. Have you ever thought of the fact that some children who come to our church may be entering a Christian environment for the first time? What an opportunity we have to surround these precious little ones with people who love them and who love Jesus.

Another blessing God wants to give children is the blessing of having the seed of the gospel planted in their little hearts. The seed of the Gospel will never germinate until it is planted. That is why it is so important that we plant those seeds in Sunday School; in choir; in VBS, in GA’s and RA’s and in everything we do that involves children. That seed will then have the chance to ripen unto harvest. That is how God wants to bless the children. Next we see that:

3. There Were Hindrances To The Children (13)

“...But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.” (13). The Disciples mistakenly thought that Jesus was too important to be bothered with little children. They tried to keep the children away from Jesus.

I wonder how many times without realizing it, that we hinder children from coming to Jesus. We can hinder them through:

A. Neglect – How often are kids overlooked in ministry? By that I mean, sometimes kids are merely baby-say and are not being taught about Jesus. Some people think that children are too young to make any real contribution to the church. Some folks tend to view children as a liability rather than an asset. Some see them as

an expense rather than a responsibility. Thank God I haven't seen any of that here, but you see my point! Let us not ever hinder our children by neglecting them. Jesus didn't! We can also hinder them through:

B. A Bad Example – We can either be good examples to our children or bad examples. The Disciples weren't very good examples. By example, they were teaching children that they weren't important to Jesus.

We are doing the same thing when we don't bring our children with us to Sunday School and to church, or when we bring them only if something else doesn't come up.

We hinder them by our example when the only thing they hear about Church is negative. By the way, this applies to adults too. I sat in a restaurant several years ago and listened while a group of ladies talked down about their church in a crowded room of people. What do you think the ones who heard their conversations thought about that church?

We hinder them by example when they don't see that Jesus is important in our lives. When they hear adults using bad language, or see them drinking, or going to places they shouldn't go, they are being hindered from coming to Jesus.

Listen, the world is full of enough hindrances for our children. Let's resolve to be a positive encouragement to our children, not a hindrance to them. Next we see that:

4. Jesus Teaches the Disciples Grace (Mt. 18:1-2)

The Disciples must have thought they were more important than these children and that Jesus was more interested in them. After all, they thought, they were the ones who did all the important things. **Matthew 18:1 (NIV)** says that one time they even "*came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'*" So no wonder they thought they were more important to Jesus than the children. After all, they were the adults, and adults do so much more than children do.

That's how we can think sometimes. We think that since we're the ones who teach do all the jobs in church, and we're the ones who tithe, well, we're more important to God.

But Jesus has a great lesson to teach us here in Mt. 18. It's a lesson of grace. Jesus' love for us isn't based on what we do. It's based upon grace.

The Disciples were trying to out-do each other so Jesus would perhaps promote them to a high position. They were the ones who thought they deserved God's blessing.

But Jesus called for a little child to stand among them (vs. 2). This was a child who hadn't done anything to deserve the love of Jesus. He hadn't put money in the offering plate. He hadn't taught a Sunday School class, or served as a deacon. But Jesus told the disciples that they needed to become like this little child to enter the kingdom of heaven.

That's a living picture of grace. Jesus showed them a love for a little child who hadn't done anything to earn it. Jesus showed them what His grace is all about. You would have thought they would have learned this lesson by the time of Mt. 19:13, but apparently as Dwight West says, their forgetter was better than their rememberer. Finally, in our story we see that:

5. Jesus Rebuked the Disciples (Mark 10:14)

Mark adds something that Matthew doesn't mention. He says that when the Disciples rebuked those who were bringing the children to Jesus, Jesus, in turn, rebuked them! Mark says He was "*indignant*" (KJV "*much displeased*") which means He was "*violently irritated*." He was furious with them over this. He was not going to stand for this kind of behavior and attitude.

So what He was saying to the disciples is this: "*If you treat these little ones this way, then you're treating Me this way because children are what the Kingdom of God is all about!*"

Listen, the things we do with our children and youth in Sunday School on Youth retreats, at Fall Festivals, and in church – it's about the Kingdom of God. It's not all about having fun or how tired you are – this is Kingdom work.

When we invest in our children, we are investing in the Kingdom of God. Did you know that 80% of those who come to know the Lord, do so before the age of 18? Less than 20% are saved after age 18. That is why children were such a priority with Jesus, and that is why children ought to be our priority too!

Let me ask you: Where will we be 20 years from now if we don't invest in our children today? We invest so much in other things – houses, cars, clothes, etc. but all these things wear out and break down. We won't be

able to take any of those things with us to heaven. But what we invest in our children counts for eternity. We need to see the importance of that.

This passage and others like it leave no doubt that Jesus loves children. But it wasn't just a sentimental type of love. He taught that children were a priority.

We need to do what Jesus did. We need to take them into our arms and into our hearts. We need to pray for them, and bless them with the best that we have to offer them. That's what Jesus did. Jesus blessed them with Himself. We need to bless them by giving them Jesus. Only Jesus can bless them with eternal life. Only Jesus can bless them with a hope for the future, and with a faith that will sustain them in times of troubles, and with a peace that will carry them through the rough times. Only Jesus can bless them with a love that will be with them for all eternity.

Conclusion: What an opportunity we have before us this year! Let's not waste it. Let's bring our children to Jesus and then bring Jesus to our children and let Him bless them with His love.