

“Suffer the Little Children”
Mark 10:13-16
(Preached at Trinity, February 6, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we began chapter 10 we found that Jesus had departed from Galilee and crossed the Jordan River into the region of Judea north of Jericho.
Once again He found Himself surrounded by crowds of people and once again He found himself embroiled in controversy with the Pharisees.
2. Being asked the question of whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife Jesus took the opportunity to teach on the subject of marriage and divorce.
3. When alone with His disciples he gave further directions.
Marriage is an institution established by God at creation to be the foundation of human society. The bond created when a man and woman wed must not be broken.
4. Now as we come to **Verse 13** it appears that the scene has changed again. In **Verse 10** Jesus was alone in a house with his disciples. Now in **Verse 13** it appears that others have joined Him.
Mark 10:13 NAU - "And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them."
The identity of the "they" isn't given, but they stand in contrast to "the disciples."
5. They were bringing the children to Jesus that He might bless them. The disciples responded by rebuking them.
6. Once again, we find the disciples seeing things differently from the way Jesus saw them. How often is our mind different from the mind of Christ. Mark records that Jesus became "indignant." The word is an expression of anger. Interestingly we find the same word spoken by the disciples later on in this same chapter.
The scene once again involves pride and the desire for selfish power.
Mark 10:35-37 NAU - "James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." ³⁶
And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³⁷ They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory."
Mark 10:41 NAU - "Hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John."
With Jesus His anger was a righteous anger due to their abuse of these little children. To keep anyone from approaching Christ is great sin.
Mark 9:42 NAU - "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea."
The anger of the disciples later on was a selfish anger.
7. The scene is similar to the one involving children in the previous chapter. The main difference is here we find other people (parents?) introducing the children while in the previous chapter Jesus takes the initiative and introduces the child.
 - A. His purpose in the other chapter was to illustrate status in the Kingdom of God. He taught His disciples about receiving such insignificant ones.

- B. Now having received the instruction of Christ the disciples have the opportunity to demonstrate receiving such little ones and instead we find rejection.
8. The primary focus here is the failure of the disciples to recognize their own pride which is the antipathy of entering into the Kingdom of God.
This would be a long process as it is for each of us.
Mark 10:37 NAU - "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory."
Luke 22:33-34 NAU - "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" ³⁴ And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."
Luke 22:60-62 NAU - "But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly."
- I. First, we must take notice of those who brought the little children
- A. Although their identity remains a mystery they surely had a high opinion of Christ
1. They saw value in His favor and blessing – they did not doubt the efficacy of His touch.
His healing touch had become well-known
Mark 3:10 NAU - "all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him."
Mark 5:27-28 NAU - "after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind *Him* and touched His cloak. ²⁸ For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well.""
Mark 6:56 NAU - "Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured."
 2. There is no indication that they were seeking healing. There also isn't evidence to attach any particular religious significance to this but we cannot dismiss this possibility.
It was customary for children to be held up for blessing
Simeon at the dedication of Christ: **Luke 2:28-30 NAU** - "then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation,"
- B. There is also the suggestion of persistence
1. The imperfect verb tense suggests repeated action in the past
 2. The idea is that the disciples were rebuking them and trying to send them away but they continued with persistence.
 3. Too often people profess to be interested in Christ, but they give little energy towards seeking Him. There is no passion. Those coming to Christ must come as if there is nothing else more important – because there isn't.

- II. Second, we must take account of the reaction of the disciples
- A. They might have been motivated by a concern for Jesus
1. The Galilean ministry had been hectic. Jesus had spent much time being called upon by the multitudes for healing
 2. He had now retired into the comfort of one of the disciples' homes
 3. They might have been concerned for the wellbeing of the man Jesus Christ who was in much need of rest
 4. They might have seen the request as frivolous and unworthy of troubling the Lord
- B. More likely, they were probably indignant of the interruption for purely selfish reasons
1. Perhaps they were unhappy that Jesus' attention was being diverted away from them. They were truly concerned about the teaching on divorce.
 2. Perhaps they were unhappy about the arrival of children that can be noisy and disruptive.
 - a. We are not told the age of the children. The word παιδίον refers to a young child and can refer to an infant. It is the word used in **Chapter 9** to describe a child held in Jesus' arms. The account in Luke uses the word βρέφος which describes an infant. They could have been toddlers.
 - b. These were not the children of the disciples and large numbers of young children might have been disruptive.
 3. Most likely the disciples simply didn't want to be bothered. Although in traditional Hebrew culture children were seen as blessings from God, in Roman culture children were not held high in the first century. Infanticide was not outlawed in Roman law until A.D. 375. We can see the lack of respect for children with Herod's public slaughter of babies after the birth of Christ.
- C. Whatever the motive of the disciples, they were rebuked by our Lord. Whatever their view of children Jesus gave them great importance.
- III. The reaction of Christ
- A. He commanded that the children be brought and not hindered
1. His response was one of rebuke
Mark 10:14 NAU - "He was indignant"
 2. Once again we find Jesus' tenderness towards children
He was always gracious and merciful – the children loved Him
He took them in His arms and it would seem that this was fine with them.
The passage in **Chapter 9** seems to imply He held the child for an extended period
 3. What did Jesus mean: **Verse 14** "for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
 - a. Jesus is speaking of those who have a rightful share in the Kingdom of God.

- b. In **Verse 15** Jesus speaks of both “receiving” and “entering” the Kingdom. To “enter” speaks of our eternal destiny. To “receive” speaks more of submission to God’s demands. It is a radical life that few are willing to receive.
- 4. By saying that the kingdom belongs to children is Jesus teaching that all children have entrance into the Kingdom? Is this teaching an age of accountability? This would be an improper exegesis of the text. This isn’t the meaning of Jesus here.
- 5. Nor is this sufficient reason to conclude that the children of believing parents are members of the Kingdom as many teach
 - a. Matthew Henry – “The children of believing parents belong to the kingdom of heaven, and are members of the visible church.”
 - b. It does point to the fact that parents should strive to bring their children to Christ. Parents should dedicate both themselves and their children to the Lord.
 - c. Parents should be careful that they are not a hindrance to their children coming to Christ.
- B. What is the particular significance of children here as regarding entrance into the Kingdom?

Mark 10:15 NAU - "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

1. This is one of the 14 ἀμῆν sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. This tells us that it is something of significance; something we should not miss. There is something about children that is of the essence of entering into the Kingdom of God. What are some things that are significant about children?
2. Children have nothing to offer. They are the least in society. This was the point Jesus was making in **Chapter 9**. Humility is of the essence of entering into the Kingdom.
3. There is no pretense, no false attempt to hide their true nature. Honest submission to Christ is essential to entering into the Kingdom of God.
4. Children are trusting of those who care for them - It is of this type that would characterize those who experience the saving grace of God. A childlike faith—simple, humble, trusting
5. Most important, children are completely helpless. So is everyone who enters into the Kingdom of God. We are completely dependent upon God. He must save us. He must change us.

Conclusion:

1. The main focus of this passage is the attitude of the Apostles. Once again we find an attitude of selfishness and pride. Jesus held forth these little ones as the heart of the Kingdom. Humility. Selflessness.
2. How often do we get wrapped up in our own selfish desires while disregarding the needs of others? Jesus reminds the disciples that these little insignificant children are exactly how we need to see ourselves in the Kingdom. Small, insignificant, helpless, dependent, harmless
3. This was a difficult lesson for the disciples to learn. And it is difficult for us.