

Mark 10:13-16

“God’s workshop, the playground”

- I. **Introduction**
- II. **Vs. 13-14a Becoming child like**
- III. **Vs. 14b-16 The religion of a child**

I. **Introduction**

Our last two times together we looked at marriage and divorce and today our initial focus will be on children. It’s not surprising that the family is very important to the Lord after all it was His idea that was implemented at creation. This morning we will begin our teaching looking at two seemingly very different events:

- Vs. 13-16 The first four verses record the annoyance of the disciples as some brought children to Jesus and His corrective response to them.
- Vs. 17-22 The next 6 verses record the very familiar story that we know as “The Rich Young Ruler”.

At face value these two stories seem to have no connection and are just random events that have ended up next to each other on the same page. I believe they are connected not textually but by way of theme. ***Before we get into this section verse by verse allow me to explain how the theme of children being kept away from Jesus is connected to Jesus’ words to a rich young ruler.*** The connection is verse 14 where Jesus says to His disciples, “*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.*” The focal point of the connection is this little phrase “**for of such** is the kingdom of God”. Jesus told His disciples that there is something in the characteristics of **ALL** children that is absolutely essential for a person if they are going to be in the Kingdom of God. The puzzling thing about this is that Jesus **DOESN’T** tell us what those characteristics are. The very next story is the rich young ruler whose sole interest is to

find out what he must do to enter the kingdom of God. **There is your connection!** *These children possessed some untold riches that the rich young ruler, with all he had, recognized he was still lacking.* He had, no doubt, witnessed the children coming to Jesus, heard what He had told His disciples and then approached Him later wanting to know how he could go about to obtaining it.

II. Vs. 13-14a Becoming child like

Vs. 13-14a This is one of the most painted scenes in all the Bible, artists love to depict this story in their art. One can easily see the children crawling all over Jesus, sitting on His lap, pulling on His clothes, grabbing His hands and touching His face. All of them eager for His attention and He eager for theirs even as a young man of 30 years of age who wasn't married and had no children. I often wonder if His time with children wasn't His most enjoyable time on earth as children represented in so many ways the ideal of the creation and the hope for the kingdom of God? I also wonder if His amazing way with adults wasn't enhanced because of His unique ability to see the child in each and every person He met? The story before us has **two major points**:

- a. Vs. 13-14a Jesus' rebuke of His disciples at their protectiveness of Him with regards to people bringing their children to Him.
- b. Vs. 14b-16 The Unspoken qualities that children possess that are essential for entrance into the kingdom of God.

The word "*they*" in the Greek is in the masculine gender which suggests that it was the father's that brought their children to Jesus. Mark indicates for us that the motive behind the disciples was a misguided sense of protection as they were concerned that parents were wasting Jesus' precious time. We are told that "*they brought little children to Jesus*" but the Greek has it that they kept on do so. The phrase "*that He might touch them*" refers to a custom of laying hands upon someone for the purpose of praying a blessing upon

them which finds its origins in Genesis 48:14-15 where Joseph brought his two sons to be blessed by his father Jacob. Usually this blessing was to be bestowed by the ruler of the synagogue but here appears to be instigated due to the enormous popularity of Jesus as the miracle working prophet. What is of further interest is that the Greek also has it that every time they brought children to Jesus to bless the disciples kept on trying to stop or rebuke the effort. Clearly the disciples believed that there were greater needs where His time could be better spent than blessing children. There were lepers to be cleansed, lame that could be given their appendages back, blind that could be given their sight but these little children needed none of those things and His time with them took away His time with others. It all sounds rather reasonable when you put it that way doesn't it. In fact, it sounds rather familiar as we often sigh things far less as reasons we don't have time to enter act with our own children and grandchildren. I think of that 1974 hit song by Harry Chapin "*Cats in the Cradle*" that was recorded from a poem written by his wife Sandra. It's about a father who is "too busy" to spend time with a son who longs to be just like his dad and ends up unfortunately becoming just that. I believe that song points out a very real problem that apparently was prevalent in Jesus time as well; **the rush to not spend time as a family**. We have all become too busy and we wonder why we see a generation not very different than us children of the 60's who took the lie of Timothy Leary and "*Turned on, tuned in and dropped out*". The only real difference today is what our youth is turned on to, tuned into too and dropped out of! **I believe Jesus understood the incredible resource our children are when families are more than just living in the same house.**

I'm fascinated by how children were naturally drawn to Jesus! What a lesson Jesus is giving His disciples that children don't need to become more like adults to be respond to things of the kingdom of God but rather that adults need to become more like children in order to become responsive to the kingdom of God. These disciples didn't need to get in the way keeping the little children from coming to Jesus they needed to get out of the way.

The Greek word "*greatly displeased*" is a strong word with great emotion visibly indicating indignation. This response reveals the degree of Jesus' displeasure at His disciple's misrepresentation the nature of His kingdom. Jesus then went on to command that they stop hindering the children from coming to Him and forbids the practice ever again.

III. Vs. 14b-16 The religion of a child

Vs. 14b-16 The 2nd point Jesus made is that ***children are models to emulate*** if you are to enter the kingdom. Jesus isn't saying that as adults we need to be "*childish*" but rather "*child-like*" to enter the kingdom. Yet as I've noted Jesus doesn't elaborate on what those qualities or characteristics are. Instead He just emphasizes the necessity of emulating those qualities as He says, "*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*" It seems to me that after making such an absolute statement concerning the qualities found in children and not telling us what they are assumes three things:

- a. **These qualities ought to be pretty self evident as not needing to be said.**
- b. **In not saying them, was a way employed by Jesus to draw people into their discovery. This in turn would make adults begin the process of becoming like the qualities He had just said were essential for the kingdom of God.**

- c. Finally, as I noted above **I believe that we can test our answers by evaluating the qualities that the rich young ruler possessed and lacked.**

Here then are **the guidelines for our search:** These qualities **must be universal to all children, in all ages, through out time.** They also **must be qualities that adults can and should get back too but often lose as adults.** I believe that there are **three such traits** and

I personally look for these in the men who I disciple as I believe Jesus did as well.

- **Transparent:** The first quality that you see in children is their overall approach on life, is SIMPLE and uncomplicated. Children are what they are, they go right to the heart of things and ask the boldest of questions. They are not Politian's and don't worry about things coming out right. They also don't put on airs, if they hurt or something isn't right they let you know. They are direct and immediate in their approach to things. Above everything else they are curious which gives them an overall uncomplicated nature. Further more they demand the same direct approach to life and are excited to share it with whoever is closest to them. This vulnerability is what is often exploited by adults but is what makes them children. This kind of **TRANSPARENCY** is what I believe is the first quality Jesus speaks of. All children possess it and all adults must get back to it if they are going to receive the kingdom of God.
- **Teachable:** The 2nd quality in children is there hunger to learn knew things. Everything and everyone is a discovery. Their favorite word is "**WHY**"? It propels them beyond the status quo and normal fears, that overwhelm adults. They are all right in telling you that they don't know something in order to learn what they don't know. They are open to instruction, ***they are clay, not cement!*** The key to teaching them is hitting on that discovery in a way that is right on the edge of out of control. Children love new ideas and new ways of doing things and will quickly try to emulate what they have just learned. What is amazing to me is to see what happens to adults, we often lose that teachable heart and it is replaced with a heart that is arrogant and believes that it already knows more than anyone else. If the favorite word for the child is "**WHY**" then the favorite words for the adult is the explanation of "**WHY NOT**"! Jesus says that adults need to get back to discovery and a teachable heart if they want to receive the kingdom of God. I have found that it is possible for us adults to get back to teach-ability but it usually comes at the price of trials and brokenness.
- **Transference:** The final quality is often debated by parents observing their own children but is nonetheless true of children. All children and I do mean ALL, have to put into practice what they have learned. Oh it may not be when we parent's want them to, or the way in which we want them too but rest assured our children will be applying what they learned and teaching others to do the same. Such "*transference of information*" is a hall mark of being a child as they are by nature responsive and will parrot what they have learned and heard. Often this makes for some embarrassing moments for adults do to what they have unwittingly taught them concerning words and phrases as well as actions. Further more this transference of what they have

learned is almost always seen in “*immediate obedience*” that goes unnoticed or unappreciated by adults. What I love to watch in children is that once they have learned some new thing they don’t wait until they have mastered it before they are immediately trying to teach another child how to do it. These little people are natural disciple’s as well as discipler’s, why it’s in their nature. Adult’s have lost the desire to pass on with excitement what they have just learned to others and will leave what they have just learned and found beneficial to the “Professionals”. Jesus tells us that if we want to receive the kingdom of God we will need to get back to a messy life of going for it as we share His love with others!

The Greek has it that Jesus took them up one by one and fervently and passionately kept on blessing each one of them. What an adult need’s, according to Jesus, is not to abandon child-like qualities but go back to them. ***Our home is heaven but according to this the playground is God’s workshop! Christianity is preeminently the religion of a child!***

Hey, saints, “little ones” will you join me in a new revolution of these traits? Let’s not settle for being “old Dogs” but instead by like little children: **Transparent, Teachable and Transference!**