

SERMON: Luke 18:15-17
GROW UP TO BE A CHILD!

*Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them;
But when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.
But Jesus called them [the little ones] to Him, and said,
“Let the little children come to Me,
And do not forbid them;
For of such is the kingdom of God.
Assuredly, I say to you,
Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child
Will by no means enter it.”*

What do you want to be when you grow up? Rancher? Farmer? Pastor? Teacher? Computer tech? A good Mom? A good Father? No one wants grow to be nothing; no one wants to be at the bottom of the heap. Each one wants to be “up,” a little bit. All of you are still advancing and growing up in life—whether 7, 17, 27, or 77!

Chapter 18 of Luke presents us with various “stations and situations” in life—many being less than what one would want, but nonetheless blessed through faith in the Lord and Savior. In a parable, there was a helpless widow, who after repeated requests did receive help from an unjust judge. In a second parable, there was a Jewish tax collector—that is, a “publican,” a “public” servant of the Roman government—who went to pray at the temple, but had no credits to his name; yet through his simple repentance went home justified. On the other hand, the “front-row” self-righteous Pharisee, who had many stars to his name, did not. Then there was a rich, self-confident ruler who came seeking Jesus’ compliments and approval for his path of life to heaven, but after hearing Jesus’ words went away sad. There was a blind beggarman, who cried out to Jesus in faith for healing, but was promptly told by others to be quiet; Jesus healed him. There were the disciples, that had left so much behind in order to walk with and learn from Jesus. There was Jesus Himself, about to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified for the sins of the world; yet He would rise again! In each of case, the “lowly-s,” the “nobody-s,” through faith in the Lord, were blessed with God’s mercy and love; whereas the “in-front” people were not. It is in this setting that we find these verses about children—lowly children—and Jesus.

Then “they” also brought infants to Him that He might touch them. Who are the “they” that brought the infants? Mothers? It doesn’t say “mothers.” Mark’s parallel account doesn’t say “mothers” either—just “they.” Who were the “they”? Surely fathers and mothers. “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). These parents were interested in the future for their children. You are too, aren’t you? What do you want them to grow up to be? Best answer: Sheep and lambs of the flock of Jesus the Savior.

They “brought” them. It took some effort. The word “brought” could be translated “carried” to Jesus. Likely older ones walked, but I am convinced many were carried. Why? Because of the word “infants”—which in the original is the word used for “newborns” and even “babes in the womb.” Bring your “littlest” ones to Jesus. It takes effort. There are times, I’m sure, you do not seem to get much out of the service because you’re struggling with the little one, but how much do you get out of the service if you stay home? How do the children learn to act in God’s house, if they are not brought to God’s house? Let no one despise you for brining your little ones to Jesus.

Why did these want to bring their infants to Jesus? *That He might touch them.* A great deal is conveyed by touch—be it the touch of a family member, loved one, friend, doctor. On the other hand, the touch of an attacker conveys a great deal in the opposite direction. They wanted Jesus to “touch” their little ones—to bless them with love and concern. But “to touch” is more than just physical, isn’t it? Have you touched someone’s life? We “touch” people, and their thoughts, emotions, and lives by our words and actions. Jesus with love, forgiveness, and salvation touches the deep need of our souls—forgiveness before God, reconciliation/being-at-peace with the Lord, sure confidence for the resurrection, and eternal life in heaven. Jesus wants to touch you and your children with His Word. His Word works in the “heart,” not just the “brain.” Whether a little one’s brain is developed enough to “process” these truths, doesn’t matter. The “heart” and the soul does. A little one loves mother and father, long before there is mental ability to process the reasons. The same is true of the Word and the love of God in Jesus.

But when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. The disciples, these “students/“learners,” accompanying Jesus stepped in to help—so they thought. How many students know more than their teachers, or as much as their teachers? In error, the disciples rebuked “them”—the adults and surely the older children too. Everybody likes to be “over” others. “Jesus is too busy for little kids. Don’t bother the Teacher now. Little ones won’t get this. Etc.” What was the problem here? The disciples “saw” what was going on, but did not understand.

They “saw,” and put their own “spin” on it, and scolded. Perhaps they were “itching to help, to show Jesus how fast they were catching on. Alas! the disciples surely “meant well,” but didn’t get the big picture. Do you ever “mean well” and do the wrong thing, because you don’t get the big picture? It happens to sinners. Run to the Lord for forgiveness and for wisdom for the next time.

But Jesus called them to Him, I have regularly thought “He called them to Him” meant He was calling the disciples to Himself to say to them, “Hey, guys, time out. That’s not what I want,” rather than denounce them in public. But not so! It is very clear from the words of the original that “He called them” is referring to the “little ones!” He called, invited, and encouraged “them” to come to Him, overriding what the disciples were saying. Sort of like Mom or Dad stepping in, when older brother or sister has said to a younger one, “You can’t have that!” but Dad or Mom say, “Yes, that’s for you to play with.” Jesus called them, the children, to Himself. *Let the little children come to Me.*

At this point the text does not say infants, but Jesus says “little children.” We conclude there were more in the group than tiny babies—likely whole families with various aged children. *Do not forbid them!* To keep a child from the Lord does not please Him—whether keeping them from church or keeping them from Bible training at home. Do you read and study from the Bible with them at home—even on the simplest level? Do not forbid them! - --- Perhaps I “preaching to the choir” this morning; you and your families are here. But there isn’t anyone who can legitimately claim a “I get a pass” on this one. Rather, “God have mercy on me a sinner.” In Jesus, He does.

Of such is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is made up of those who cling to Christ in childlike faith. Consider the simple trust and faith of a child. If you tell a young child the sky is green, the child will believe you and repeat that the sky is green. The message of salvation in Jesus—like “the sky is green”—is not something that matches (sinful) human logic and reason. To the adult mind it is farfetched and impossible. Yet by childlike faith/trust, it is yours. Trust Him! *Assuredly, I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.* “Assuredly” is the word “Amen”—Amen! The truth! Most certainly! Assuredly! *Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.* When you stand with simple trust in the Lord and in His promise of salvation through Jesus—a trust that is engendered by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God—you stand cleansed of your sins, are part of God’s family, and are a citizen of His eternal kingdom. Without such childlike faith, you and everyone else are lost! Condemned! Cast out! Beware!

Suitably, on “Independence Day” weekend, we are happy and thankful for our nation’s heritage and freedoms. We are not subject to any taskmaster’s rule, or any tyrant’s lashes. Independence! It’s a great national and political gift. But, you are never “independent” of God. He’s your Creator, your Savior, and your Counselor—working all things for your reconciliation and peace, your resurrection, and eternal life in heaven. Humbly thank Him for this nation, humbly pray for its future, and humbly live here as His child redeemed and rescued by Jesus for heaven.

Keep growing up in your faith all your life long. Never get too “big for your britches.” Never buy the devil’s lie that you don’t need the Lord and Savior? What do you want to be when you grow up? A CHILD! A Child of God, trusting in Christ!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---