

**SERMON: Mark 10:13-16**  
**THE SAVIOR'S CARE FOR CHILDREN**

*And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.*

There's nothing quite like the sound of children playing at recess—running, swinging, cheering, shouting, high-pitched happy voices, burning off energy. It doesn't matter what country or what language. It's a one of a kind sound, pleasant to hear.

This text talks to us about children, and children's happiness, and Jesus' care for children. Jesus and His disciples had traveled from Galilee to Judea. Jesus went to the region east of the Jordan River, a sparse wilderness area, away from the population centers of Jerusalem and other familiar communities on the west side. Nevertheless, as often was the case, multitudes of people traveled out to see Him. Our text says, *They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them.* Were these “young children” 10 and under? 12 and under? We don't know. However, Luke specifically uses the word for infants! These children did not arrive at Jesus' side on their own. “*THEY*” brought them. Who are the “they”? One easily pictures mothers bringing their little ones, but the text says “they.” Surely it was fathers and mothers, who had traveled across the Jordan to see Jesus themselves and now brought their children to Him. Remember when Jesus fed the 5000? The Bible says there were 5000 “men” plus “women and children”—whole families!

These, the “they,” *BROUGHT* them to Jesus. Surely some of them were carried and others walked. Fathers and mothers had brought them--directed them--to Jesus. When caring for children, by all means your own, or grandchildren, or any, the most important thing you can do for them is to bring them to Jesus, their Savior. Don't simply say, I'll let them figure religion on their own. I don't want to force my beliefs on them. Your “beliefs”? Is that all it is—your beliefs? It is the Truth of God above! In love, God the Father sent His Son to die for them, for you, and for the world. Fathers, on this Father's Day, remember Paul's words in Ephesians, *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath* [do not exasperate your children], *but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4). Fathers and mothers, no matter what your children's Sunday School teachers teach them, no matter what the pastor teaches them, most—if not all—will be quickly and effectively erased by what YOU do and teach. Children look to their parents for leadership. For Christ to be important to them, they need to see that Christ the Savior is supremely important to you. Do not just “bring” them for a hasty session at church and then go on your way, but bring them so that they and you stay with Him together lifelong.

The text says they wanted Jesus *to touch them*—not just poke His finger into their cheek, but literally to “grasp,” to “lay hold” of them. So much is communicated by touch—tenderness, strength, love. How well would a baby develop, who was fed and nourished, but never touched by mother, or father, or family member, or anyone? The child would not know the personal warmth of love. I think the child would die. Or consider a young couple who never touched? Just a cold mechanical relationship. It would not last. The truth is that God touched Adam and Eve when He made them! Adam from the dust and Eve from the rib of Adam. Babies are touched by mother for nine months before they are born! It was not simply the physical touch of Jesus that the parents were seeking. They wanted Jesus to “touch” their hearts. Jesus touches hearts through His Word, through Baptism, and through the Lord's Supper. “*I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep* (John 10:11). The Holy Spirit brings that message to your heart. He too “touches” you—*Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit!* (1 Corinthians 6:19). This morning in Holy Communion, Jesus touches you in a physical and a spiritual way. He gives His very body and blood, miraculously yet truly present in the bread and the wine. He says to your heart, I am with you—I have freed you from the guilt of your sins—I have spared you from the Father's anger, I have rescued you from eternal death—You are mine. The power of touch!

Sadly, the disciples, letting their imaginary importance take over, estimated that Jesus did not have time for, concern for, or any reason to associate with children. They were trying to keep them away from Jesus. Do any of you ever discourage children from hearing and learning the Truth of His Word? With your own lackluster attendance at worship? With your own attendance at worship but no follow-up and heartfelt discussions about Scripture and salvation at home? With your blasphemous use of the name of “Jesus Christ” and of “God”? Do not discourage them.

*When Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.* Jesus was displeased. It’s not a good idea to displease Jesus. Think of the two times He went into the Temple in Jerusalem and drove out the buyers, sellers, and money changers who were making His Father’s house a merchandise market for profit? Jesus was much displeased. Or think of His coming at the End with punishment for the unbelievers. *Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: (Matthew 25 :41).* Here Mark says, *He was much displeased*—literally “He had had very much.” He had had His fill. In front of all, He reprimanded His disciples, *Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God!* “Suffer,” “let,” “allow,” “send them” to Me! Stop keeping them away! I very much came for children too!

Do you suppose Jesus jumped on the disciples every time they sinned? Likely not, or that’s all He would have been doing—they were sinners! But there are times when He did, such as this one. Turning away children displeased Him. Once earlier He had said, *“Whoever offends one of these little ones, who believes in Me, it would be better for him to have a millstone tied around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea!” (Matthew 18:6).* Thank God when He takes measures to correct you too, though it not be pleasant, whether it’s your errors in dealing with children, or anything else. Remember, He corrects you because He loves you. Jesus has given us children to love and to raise in our families, our congregation, and in our communities. How pleased do you suppose He is when children are physically neglected, abused, aborted; or spiritually discouraged in their relationship with Him? Do not drive children away from Him. This morning particularly to you fathers, do not renege on your role as head of the family by saying, “Wife, you raise the kids.” Don’t be just a big kid yourself and forego your responsibility and privilege to train your children in Christ.

*Of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* Not only does Jesus consider children important to Him, but He also says, childlike faith is the only entrance into heaven. To give up on self and all self-efforts—to see one’s own unworthiness and shame, to cling onto Jesus as your Shepherd who gave up His life to rescue you, the sheep, for eternity—is the only entrance into heaven. Jesus does not say that children need to become like adults to get to heaven, but He says, that adults need to become like children! (RCH Lenski).

Children, where do you fit, in all this? Well, in this text, how much bullheadedness, disrespect, disobedience, do you see in these children? None. Not that these young ones weren’t sinners—they were. But they respected their father’s and mother’s leading. Do you always? How many of these children turned away, ran away!, from their parents and from Jesus? None. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3).* The Fourth Commandment. Martin Luther wrote: “We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.” Children, Jesus your Savior wants you to honor your parents. Do not anger and displease your parents. Do not anger and displease Jesus.

Finally, the last verse of this text, my favorite. *And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.* You see Jesus’ heart of love in action. He doesn’t just pat them on the head, but He picks them up in his arms. He holds them close to His heart. He puts His hand upon them and blesses them. The blessing is not just the touch of His hands, but the words of His mouth, the message of His heart. “My child, the Father loves you and blesses you in My Name. In My Name and by My labor, you are forgiven of all sin, you are declared righteous, guilt-free, and acceptable in His sight.” ---- Jesus’ arms are for every one of you. Have you failed and sinned as father, mother, or child? What guilt or shame are you carrying around, which is gnawing at you from the inside? Jesus picks you up His arms, the arms that He extended on the cross for you, holds you to His heart, and blesses you. Fear not, for I am with You! Your sin is forgiven! It’s the message of your heavenly Father’s love for you! As you depart from this service this morning, as you sing the remaining songs at this service—children and parents that you are—let the joy of children at recess fill your hearts. You are God’s children, at peace, rescued by Jesus!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach--