

Bless the Children with Jesus

Mark 10:13-16

Introduction

I read a story this week that demonstrates both the frustration and the joy that children can bring in our lives...

“Dad can I have a glass of water please?” the little boy called from his room.

“No, go to sleep.”

“Dad, I’m thirsty, can I PLEASE have a glass of water?”

“NO, go to sleep.”

“Daaaaad, I’m really thirsty. Can you get me a glass of water please?”

“No, and if you ask once more, I’m coming in there to spank you”

(pause)

“Dad, when you come into spank me can you bring a glass of water please?”

Psalm 127:3 says that *“Children are a gift from the Lord”!*

But do we truly believe that? Or are children more distractions that we need to “take care of.” The subject of children is at the heart of our text in Mark this morning. And as we begin, I want you first to notice how Mark positions this text within his Gospel account.

Ever since the confession that Peter made in chapter 8 that Jesus is the Christ, Mark has been focusing on the subject of discipleship. What is a disciple? And what does it mean for us to truly follow Jesus?

And in chapter 10 we have a progression here. Last week, we looked at verses 1-12 where Jesus discusses the issue of marriage and divorce. In that passage, Jesus upholds a high ideal for our marital relationships. But he also discusses the horrible reality of divorce, and in the 1st century context, women could especially be exploited because of their lack of power in these situations.

Also in the 1st century, children were often marginalized and powerless to defend themselves, which is where Mark goes next. I mean, who really suffers if a marriage ends in divorce? The children! So Mark begins a passage to uplift the children, and teach us that we need to look to children as an example of the type of attitude one should have as a disciple in the Kingdom of God. We enter the Kingdom in complete dependence upon Him.

That then will lead us to the next section about the rich, young man next week. Here is someone who is not overlooked and has a good deal of power. By the world’s standards, he is a perfect candidate to be a disciple. However, his reliance on his wealth and power is held in stark contrast to the humble, needy children we see in our passage today.

So we have much to learn from children. I pray that we can learn from this passage and begin to change our attitudes towards our children as true examples of faith.

(begin with prayer...)

So as we study this short passage of God's Word this morning, I hope that we learn this very important lesson...we need to...

Take the time to bless children with their greatest need—a lifelong relationship with Jesus.

So this morning, I see in this passage *first* a situation that arises with people bringing children to Jesus. We *then* see the disciples' faulty response to this situation. And what *follows* is Jesus' corrective teaching to his disciples which *leads* to his ultimate response to the situation (which is actually blessing these children).

And as the passage begins in verse 13, we read,

¹³And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them...

The context tells us that the "touch" of Jesus here is a blessing from him, which was a common practice in Judaism. But they don't want *any* type of blessing. They specifically are seeking out a blessing from JESUS. We'll talk more about that in a moment.

Now these people aren't specifically identified, but presumably they are the parents. However, I'm kind of glad that Mark doesn't specify that it is the parents that are bringing the children to Jesus. This shows us that it's not just parents that have a role in bringing children to Jesus, it's ALL our role to do that.

So whoever you are today, don't tune out because you don't have kids. Each and everyone of us has a role to play. And the first point that is stressed here is that we ALL need to...

Bring children to Jesus (v. 13a)

We need to be a people that believe so strongly in the worth of Christ, that we will be just like these 1st Century people who do all they can do to bring children to Jesus.

Why? Because Jesus is AWESOME! Because...

- He is the Son of God and the true Messiah in whom God the Father is well pleased.
- He is the one who overcame all the temptations that Satan could throw at Him.
- Because Jesus is THE truth and is the inaugurator of the very Kingdom of God on earth.
- He is the one who can cast out any form of demonic activity.
- He can heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, and even raise the dead back to life.
- He has power over the natural world so that he can calm a storm and walk on water.
- Because He is the one who can take the smallest, most insignificant person, and transform him into something glorious.
- He can counsel us through any difficulty that life brings.
- He teaches us how to be great by becoming the servant of all.
- Because Jesus is the one who can take the sin of that child we bring to Him and wipe those sins out by taking the penalty of death upon Himself through His death on the cross.

- Because Jesus Christ is the one who can even defeat the power of death by raising Himself up from the grave!

Why should we bring our children to Jesus? *“O Lord, to whom else shall we go? He has the words of eternal life!”* Amen?

We all should be committed to bringing children to Jesus. There really is no higher calling! What about us here at Living Hope Church? What type of priority do we have in bringing children to Jesus? Do we actively engage in activities that will help children, or do we just give it lip service and then go about doing what we think is “more important”?

In his commentary on Mark, David Garland wrote this:

Our attitude toward the value of children surfaces in how we care for the facilities for children in the church, in how much of the budget is designated for their care and training, in how we integrate them into our worship. Do they appear in worship only as cute performers who sing their song and then are shuttled off out of sight and earshot so that they cannot disturb what we regard as more important—our own quiet worship?

I believe this passage is commanding us to bring children to Jesus. So let us consider *our* role in that.

Now back to the passage in Mark 10...what happens when these people try to bring the children to Jesus? The disciples rebuke them! Wow! And it’s probably because they believe that Jesus does not have time for something so trivial as these kids. You see, in the 1st century, children really didn’t have any social status. So the disciples do not consider them worthy of the Jesus’ time.

Mark Strauss insightfully wrote in his commentary that...

The irony is that [the disciples] see themselves as protecting Jesus, preventing distracting “nobodies” from monopolizing their time. Yet by rejecting children they are in fact rejecting [Jesus] and failing to comprehend the nature and power of the gospel.

The theme of the dullness of the disciples continues. They still just don’t get it. They are jockeying for position and power. They still are just thinking about themselves and about who is the greatest.

These disciples want to be the gatekeepers. In chapter 9, verse 38 we see them determining who could use Jesus name. And here we see that they also want to determine who can have access to Jesus’ presence.

And what is Jesus’ response? The beginning of verse 14 says that *“...when Jesus saw it, he was indignant.”*

Jesus definitely does *not* believe that being with these children is a waste of time. He is very upset with his disciples for not making the time to spend with these children. And we should also learn here that we need to...

Make time for the children. You are NOT too busy! (10:13b-14a)

ILLUSTRATION: I was convicted of this just a couple of years ago in my own life. For many years, I’ve made it a priority to spend time in developing discipleship relationships with some men in the

church. I take our calling at Living Hope to be “a church that makes disciples who make disciples” seriously. So I meet with these men once a week for Bible Study and prayer.

But leave it to my wife to be used by God to challenge me in this area. She confronted me by pointing out that I spend this time with men in the church to disciple them, but what about my own sons? Aren't they worthy of the same priority? Or even more so? Aren't they in the church too? Couldn't I use that same type of time to disciple my sons?

And thus began a transformation in my own life to take a much more active role in discipling my sons. I intentionally take them out once a week to discuss spiritual things. That doesn't dismiss the kind of “on the road” discipleship at other times. But I began to prioritize discipling my sons like I hadn't before.

What about you? Do you make time for the children in your life? Or do you make similar excuses like Jesus' disciples: we're too busy, or they're not all that important?

APPLICATION: I don't think it is a coincidence that this passage was scheduled to be preached on the same day that AWANA is set to begin. This is a great ministry in which we can give back some of our time to introduce children to Jesus. We make time for the things that are important, and I believe serving our children is important...once a week, or come once a month...or just come to check it out one night...the AWANA BBQ...

Or what about serving in the nursery, preschool or children's church? Let's get rid of the myth that we are too busy to make time for the children in order to bring them to Jesus.

So let's review: we began today by seeing a situation when people were bringing children to Jesus—and we learned that we should also make it a priority to bring children to Jesus. We then saw the disciples' faulty response to this situation—and we learned that we need to make time for children. What follows next is Jesus' corrective teaching to his disciples in verses 14-15. Jesus said to them,

“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁵Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

Ultimately, we adults need to understand that...

We need to learn from children! (10:14-15)

Yes we do! They have a lot to teach us. Just listen to these nuggets of wisdom from little children that I found this week:

Patrick, age 10 – “Never trust a dog to watch your food.”

Hannah, age 9 – “When your dad is mad and asks you, ‘Do I look stupid?’ don't answer.”

Andrew, age 9 – “A puppy always has bad breath – even after eating a Tic-Tac.”

Lauren, age 9 – “Felt-tip markers are not good to use as lipstick.”

Alyesha, 13 – “When you get a bad grade in school, show it to your mom when she's on the phone.”

Joel, age 10 – “Don't pick on your sister when she's holding a baseball bat.”

Children are wonderful, yes? But these aren't *actually* the things I'm wanting us to learn from children this morning. Not Jesus' point here!

Jesus says that the kingdom of God belongs to those like children, and that we need to receive the kingdom of God like a child would.

Many have tried to figure out what Jesus is referring to. They say it is children's humility, trustfulness, hopefulness, or willingness to believe. These *are* nice things. *But* I don't think that Jesus is pointing to some inherent qualities that children possess, because they can also be demanding, stubborn, thankless and selfish. Let's be honest!

We already pointed out that in the 1st century, children had no status. They were ignored and had no one to fight for them. I believe that *this* is what Jesus is talking about when he says we must receive the kingdom like a child. Children are small and needy. They come to Jesus in a posture of complete dependence.

I love how the commentator, James Edwards, puts it:

Children are not blessed for their virtues but for what they *lack*: they come only as they are—small, powerless, without sophistication, as the overlooked and dispossessed of society...a little child has absolutely nothing to bring, and whatever a child receives, he or she receives by grace on the basis of sheer neediness rather than by any merit inherent in him- or herself.

You see, to receive the kingdom like a child means to receive it by faith and in complete dependence on God. We need to remember that we come to Jesus completely empty. We truly have nothing of value to offer. No wealth. No power. We are completely in need of the grace of God.

I think that is what Jesus is referring to when he talks about entering the Kingdom of God like a child. As Romans 5 says, *"God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

If you are still inclined to offer something to God in return for his love and acceptance, just look again at children. Like them, you have nothing to bring. Instead, embrace the love of the Father and submit to his reign in your life.

So after Jesus corrects his disciples in verses 14 & 15, look now at how our passage ends in verse 16:

¹⁶*Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.*

Jesus doesn't just give lip service to the importance of children in our lives. He actually takes the time to be with them and bless them. Let us learn from the example of Jesus:

We need take time to bless the children with our words and actions (10:16).

By actually taking the children into his arms, Jesus is showing authentic care and love for them.

ILLUS: So I told you the story earlier of how I have committed to spend quality, spiritual time with my sons. Well, once again, I was tested with living out the reality of what I'm preaching.

On the weeks I preach, I have difficulty in fitting in everything that I have to do. So I started to think that I would just skip my morning meetings with my sons so that I could get into the office earlier and work on this message.

Well, as I started to delve into this text, God began convicting me that the time I spend with my sons is for more important than the couple of hours extra I could have had working on this message. So I changed my mind and met with my sons.

Look, I'm not perfect, by any means, but I believe wholeheartedly that we all must take the time to bless the children with our words and actions. I still struggle with guiding my children adequately, especially in this digital age where they have so many distractions. But let's be committed to teaching them about the kingdom of God, and let us *also* be committed to learning from them that we too, are helpless and in need of a savior.

Conclusion

And this whole message today speaks directly to our vision here at Living Hope Church, which is to magnify Jesus Christ by embracing His vision of disciples making disciples.

One of the classic texts about passing on the faith to the next generation comes from Deuteronomy 6:7. Deuteronomy is basically a sermon from Moses to prepare the people as they finally enter into the Promised Land. Deut. 6:7 says,

You shall teach [God's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Bringing children to Jesus is something that we must do all the time. But as I was studying, this isn't the only time Moses addresses this issue in Deuteronomy. It was a very important theme throughout the book. In Deuteronomy 11:19, Moses again says,

You shall teach [God's commandments] to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Near the end of Deuteronomy, in 32:46, Moses says,

Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.

But I love the ongoing multiplication of the faith that is implied in Deuteronomy 4:9:

Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children.

This theme of passing on the faith to our children in Deuteronomy affirms the points we have been making from Mark chapter 10 today.

Our job is to make disciples who make disciples. And if you are a parent, that job starts primarily with your children, so that they then will teach their children, so that your family will have a long legacy of faith.

But we can apply this idea to the whole life of the church—we must seek out the lost, turn them into disciples of Jesus who can then lead others into that same relationship. We are never too busy to take the time to bless ALL people—including children—with their greatest need: a lifelong relationship with Jesus.

May God bless us in such a way that we see that vision come to fruition here.