

# Luke 18:15–17

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him saying, let the children come to me and do not hinder them for! to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Well, good morning and welcome to Christ Church Chicago.

This beautiful Sunday, we're so glad that you are here with us. As we continue in our series, Jesus Changes Lives.

We talk often about different segments and how adults' lives are changed. But we want to take a moment and note how Jesus also changes children's lives.

[ 1 : 1 3 ] And as a result, our lives are also forever changed.

There's a little hardback book from a few years ago. It's a bestseller. It's compiled by Stuart Hample.

It's called Children's Letters to God. It's page after page of children from ages six to eight simply writing out their questions or comments to the Lord with transparency, frankness, and often humor.

Like little Nina who writes rather honestly, dear God, I bet it's very hard for you to love all the people in the world. I only have four people in my family and I have trouble doing it.

Or the bluntness of little Bruce who wrote, dear God, please send me a pony. I've never asked you for anything before and you can look that up.

[ 2 : 3 2 ] Joyce is a little confused that her prayer evidently got mixed up. Because she writes, dear God, thank you for my baby brother, but I prayed for a puppy.

What's going on in the mind of a six year old? How deep does it go? Maybe even deeper than you might expect. Little Elliot writes, dear God, I just wanted you to know that I think about you sometimes, even when I'm not praying.

Even when I'm not praying, there are times, Lord, that I just think about you. Would we expect God to be as interested in the thoughts of a six year old as he is in the thoughts of a 26 year old or a 56 year old or someone as old as Dave?

Well, if you ask that question to the average rabbi living during the time of the ministry of Jesus, the answer probably would have been no.

God isn't all that interested in what children are thinking. But our passage today would indicate differently.

[ 4 : 0 2 ] From this passage, we will not only see how much Jesus loves children and cares for children, but also if we are ultimately going to be with him, we're going to have to be just like children.

Charles Spurgeon once said, we must not think a child cannot come to God until he is like a man, but a man cannot come until he is like a child.

We must grow down until we become like children. This is why we must not make the mistake this morning of thinking, oh, this must be a children's message.

No, this is that and even more for this is actually a kingdom message. It's a kingdom message that powerfully uses children in these three verses as its representation.

Let the children come. Now, from 30,000 feet, we can learn a lot about the importance of today's passage by looking at where it's placed in this chapter.

[ 5 : 21 ] In the preceding verses, we find the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, one of which thought his status, his deeds and his own sense of righteousness would be enough to commend him to God and give him access to God's kingdom.

Then in the subsequent verses to this passage, we find the story of the rich ruler. This ruler thought his wealth, standing and morality would gain him access to God's kingdom.

And they both were wrong. Because sandwiched in the middle between these two passages is our text today.

And it has the real key to entry into God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is not earned through religious rituals, good works or intellectual understanding.

But it is received as a gift through simple, childlike faith. Here it is. Where self-righteous and rich adults couldn't get in, a child can.

[ 6 : 37 ] Luke, by contrast, is showing us what a real disciple of Jesus Christ looks like. And the credentials that you're going to need to enter into the kingdom of God.

Let the children come. As we walk through our text, there are just a couple of points of observation I'd like to make. First, is the life-changing importance of children to Jesus.

And then secondly, is the life-changing example of children Jesus uses. Starting at verse 15, now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch him.

It's important to provide a little context here. It was customary for mothers to bring their children to some distinguished rabbi around their first birthday, usually on the eve of the Day of Atonement, that he, the rabbi, might bless them.

This was probably some of the root of this long line now of parents who are bringing their babies to Jesus. After all, this rabbi was doing stuff that no other rabbi had ever done.

[ 7 : 56 ] He was healing the sick. He was casting out demons. He was feeding 5,000 with a fish sandwich.

He stopped a funeral procession midstream and brought a widow's son back to life. Yeah, I'm in that line with my child too.

We also, however, need to be clear that the prevailing perception in the first century about children was that God had more important things to do than care about kids.

Children didn't register very high on the list of public interest. And by most accounts, they were considered a burden until they were old enough to do some work and carry their own weight.

Add to that the high infant mortality rate and children just didn't matter all that much. They were expendable.

[ 8 : 57 ] But not to Jesus. The type of verse, verse 15 says, They are bringing the children to Jesus so he could touch them.

The Gospel of Mark's account actually says he took them in his arms and blessed them. Many of us with children can remember bringing our babies to church to have them dedicated to the Lord.

We do it many times right here at Christ Church. But imagine in this sense, the one you're dedicating your child to is actually the one running the baby dedication service.

Talk about a life changing moment. Jesus loves and cares about children. You can further see the life changing importance of children to Jesus as we look at the bottom of verse 15 onto verse 16.

The disciples tried to shut down the baby dedication service. Perhaps they were thinking they were protecting his time and preserving his energy.

[ 10 : 14 ] Maybe they were upset that they weren't the ones being blessed. Don't you all understand how busy Jesus is? He has more important people to help.

People more worthy of his attention. The last thing he needs is children bothering him and in the way. Keeping him from doing really important things.

Keep in mind that Jesus was just days away from going to the cross to die. Yet, he pushed back on the disciples.

No, I've got time. Let the children come. Let me say this for a moment directly to the young children who might be here today.

Kids, no matter how young you are, Jesus loves you and cares for you and always has time for you. Just like your mom and dad and every other adult here today, Jesus has his arms open wide and desires for you to come to him.

[ 11 : 30 ] If you're unsure about how to do that, myself and many others in this room would love to show you how to come to Jesus. Now, lest we judge the disciples too harshly, we've got to be careful ourselves about sometimes being too dismissive of children.

I grew up in a time when children were to be seen and not heard. Some of you grew up like I did. If I walked into a room full of adults and interrupted my parents about something, the standard line I got was, Don't you see grown people talking?

That was code for whatever your issue is, it's not relevant at this time. And I suggest you go find a seat. Please don't misunderstand me.

Teaching our children manners, respect, and how to behave themselves is critically important. It's necessary.

In fact, we do our kids a disservice if we don't do it. But as important as that is, so is teaching them to love God, love the church, love his word, and love his people.

[ 12 : 59 ] That's why I do appreciate Amy Kohler and Ethan and all those who volunteer in Kid City and the nursery. Thank you for how you care for, love on, and tenderly teach our children in the ways of the Lord.

And help them realize the value they have in God's kingdom. What value? So much value, back at the bottom of verse 16, that Jesus tells the disciples, Don't you dare get in the way of them coming to me.

Where you might think the kingdom is too grand for children, I'm telling you that children are actually its natural inhabitants. Well, unless maybe you're five-year-old little Casey Poland.

Casey was growing more and more excited about her upcoming first day of kindergarten. Casey's three-year-old sister Jamie watched her with great fascination.

However, on the Sunday before Casey's first day of school, she fell and skinned her knee. Tears began to flow.

[ 14 : 15 ] She thought she was literally going to die. And three-year-old Jamie hearing her and seeing the blood on her big sister's knee tried to comfort her.

The best way she knew how. She says, don't worry Casey, if you do die, at least you'll go to heaven. But that made Casey cry even more.



[ 22 : 31 ] God it's the sheer receptivity of these children that Jesus is pointing to they are not those who do they are those who are done for Jesus is saying you don't enter my kingdom by who you are and what you do you enter my kingdom by who I am and what I do I'm reminded of a verse from the classic hymn rock of ages nothing in my hand I bring simply to the cross I clean naked come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace this is the example Jesus says children set for us in childlike fashion we must acknowledge our need for his grace and surrender our lives to his will so here it is church what a beautiful image is before us in this passage in a world that rushes past the week

Keep on coming, resting in what he's already done and what he continues to do. Our children are coming now to join us as we sing our response together.

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And all we have to do is come as a child. You stand ready with open arms to welcome us, to bless us, and to make us citizens of your kingdom.

[ 27 : 07 ] We love you. We thank you. Thank you for how you care for our children. May we always remember their example as we approach you.

In your son's precious name we pray. Amen. Let's all stand together.