

Let the children come to Me

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[0 : 00] Now let us turn back to the portion of scripture we've read together in the Gospel according to Luke and chapter 18. And with the Lord's help, I'd like to focus for a short while this morning on verses 15 to 17.

We may read at verse 15 again. 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. One or two thoughts on these words.

I think it's safe to say that Jesus here has reached the third year of his earthly ministry.

[1 : 17] And he has done amazing things during his ministry up until this time.

If you remember, at the very beginning of his public ministry, the Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

And he defeated Satan at every turn. He knew the full strength of the temptations that Satan brought before him.

And he withstood him. He did not sin. He was not able to sin. Because he was the eternal Son of God.

He nevertheless knew the full force and power of the tempter and the temptations that came his way. And also, in his life, he performed many miracles.

[2 : 23] You remember the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000? And the feeding of the 4,000? With a few loaves and fishes. Not only were the people satisfied, but they left bits and pieces of the food that had to be gathered up at the end of it all.

You think also of the number of people he healed from their diseases. He even raised the dead. Now he comes at this particular time, and Jesus has children brought to him.

And it's a very interesting part of the scripture when you discover that the disciples tried to stop the children from coming to him. But Jesus embraced them, touched them, and blessed them.

Having been through all his previous experiences, and having performed his many miracles, he now is willing to receive the infants and to bless them.

And I'd like just to say a few words under four headings shortly. First of all, the parents who brought these children to Jesus.

[3 : 52] It says, verse 15, they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. What kind of society were these parents living in?

That's the first thing. Secondly, the desire they had. Living in such a society, the desire they had was to bring their children to Jesus, that he might touch them.

Thirdly, this opposition that they encountered when they brought the children to Jesus. The disciples, as it were, put up a stone wall. You mustn't come near Jesus with the children.

And fourthly, the encouragement that Jesus gave. Despite the disciples' short-sightedness, Jesus said to them, He called them to him, saying, Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

These four points. Firstly, the kind of society in which these children were being brought up.

[5 : 13] And you can focus for a short while on the first section of this chapter to get a feeling for the kind of society in which these children were born and where they were going to be brought up.

You come face to face with somebody in authority. This man is a judge. And the man who was a judge, it says of him that he neither feared God nor respected man.

He was a selfish man. He was an unloving man. He was an ungracious man. Nevertheless, a man in authority.

Able to make people suffer. If he wasn't willing to comply with what the people needed and required and asked of him.

And who do we see coming to this unjust judge? A widow. In that city, he kept coming to him and saying, Give me justice against my adversary.

[6:18] now the widows had no protector the widows were often impoverished and poor had this widow been well off she may have paid a bribe to the judge and maybe this is what he was looking for in order to have her case seen and straightened out but she didn't have money she didn't have power she had nothing going for her and she just kept coming and coming and coming to this unjust man and then he was getting tired of her continual coming as if he was sitting in his office and every day she would knock at the door the next day knock at the door next day again eventually he got so tired of it she was beating him down and bothering him and that's why he gave her what she was looking for it wasn't out of compassion or from a sense of justice he just wanted to live his own life in quietness doing his own thing and that's why he relented it was a selfish attitude that he had that's the kind of society that's the kind of society she was in there seems to be a corrupt judiciary around about her and then next one the tax collector and the Pharisee we see them coming up to the temple to pray the Pharisees were renowned for their self-righteousness they had a holier than thou attitude and you see that coming out very clearly in the Pharisee's prayer when he says in verse 11

I thank you that I am not like other men well he's putting himself above other men looking down on other men saying that they are extortioners and unjust and adulterous or even like this tax collector you know the tax collectors had a reputation they were in the employ of the Roman authorities and they were gathering taxes for them and very often if the tax collector was an unworthy and dishonest person he would demand more taxes of the people and send to Rome what Rome required but then he would pocket the rest himself so that some of them became very rich and they were in the estimation of the people robbers daylight robbers and they were held in very poor esteem by the people so we have this tax collector and we have this Pharisee in the temple and we see that the Pharisee he wasn't a repenting man he was continuing in his self-righteousness although the tax collector did repent and he sought the Lord's blessing upon his life but there was this kind of climate this kind of atmosphere surrounding these parents with their infants they felt that the judiciary was corrupt that there was so much

Pharisee and self-righteous attitude among the people who were the official church of the time and they felt that they were so often robbed by the tax collectors and they felt as it were so difficult to live in this kind of atmosphere and situation and where do we go?

where do we go? well this is what I believe was on the mind of these parents with their little infants in their arms what's the best place for us to bring up our children?

to whom shall we go? well they had heard of Jesus very probably Jesus is there it's as if he was like a light in a dark place that he was truth in the midst of so much untruth that he was caring in the midst of such selfishness that he was the one to come to a light in a dark place and he brought the children to Jesus that's the best place for us all to come particularly if we are parents bringing up children our society generally is very very corrupt there's an amazing verse there in

[11:34] Isaiah chapter 5 and Isaiah speaks in his prophecy of the state the immoral state of the nation of Judah when he was preaching and in Isaiah 5 verse 20 it says woe to those who put darkness for light and light for darkness who call evil good and good evil who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter and you see strains of that kind of thing in our own society today do you not if you bring as it were aspects of our society under the searchlight and the microscope of God's word you realize how far short the standards that prevail in our society are coming short of what God requires of us and we see that the best one to come to in the midst of such a society is the

Lord Jesus Christ if you remember Hannah the mother of the prophet Samuel when little Samuel was born we find her praying there in 1 Samuel chapter 1 verse 27 and Hannah said for this child I prayed in other words she had brought the little child to the Lord in her prayers she had brought him to the Lord I believe when she prayed that she would have a child and she promised that if the Lord were to give her a child that she would dedicate him to the Lord all the days of his life she prayed for him before he was born she prayed for him after he was born she was bringing him to the Lord in her prayers and we see that that is exactly what the

Lord required of us also just what these parents were doing with their infants they brought the infants to Jesus that he might touch them that he might touch them the touch of Jesus is the solution to all of our problems listen to what it says here there was a leper there and you read about this in Matthew chapter 8 verse 3 and the leper said Lord if you are willing you can make me clean and Jesus touched him and said I am willing be clean Jesus' touch cleansed or healed him from his leprosy and Jesus' touch can heal us from our physical diseases our mental problems and particularly our spiritual uncleanness a touch from

Jesus saying be clean cleanses us from our sin what about Peter's wife's mother another one that he touched she was ill with a high fever and the Lord Jesus touched her and her fever left what about the people who are blind the many instances we have in the gospels of people who couldn't see a thing nevertheless Jesus touched them and they saw the light there was one man who had been born blind and when Jesus gave him sight he saw light for the first time and that's the touch that we all need also that the Lord would open our eyes spiritually to see ourselves for what we are unclean and impure and sinful and lost and also to see Jesus Christ the sinner saviour who doesn't despise your uncleanness or your lostness if you truly come to him he will open his arms and receive you to himself another incident also when the disciples when they were on the Mount of Transfiguration and the glory of the revelation they saw there made them very much afraid but it says there in Matthew 17 7 Jesus touched them and said arise and be not afraid be not afraid what about Jesus touching Malchus the man whose ear Peter cut off in the garden of Gethsemane Malchus was among the enemies of Christ and he was ready to arrest Christ and Peter tried to protect Christ from him by cutting this man's ear off you know what Jesus did Jesus touched him and healed his ear that the

[17 : 25] Lord would touch our ear and open our ears to hear his voice that still small voice of salvation well that's what these parents wanted for their children they wanted this amazing saviour the light of the world the great healer the great saviour to touch their children and to bless them and I'm sure that's what the parents before us here today who are seeking baptism for their children and who are to be baptized they seek the best for their children also and I cannot commend to them any better than to do what these parents did here to bring their children to Jesus that he might touch them with the touch of salvation but then amazingly we see that when they were bringing the children to the

Lord the disciples said no you mustn't do that well you may expect people who have no sympathy for the gospel to say something like that people who don't believe in the Bible or in Christ or who don't come to church they don't they're not really bothered whether you come to Jesus or not but the disciples should have known better shouldn't they they must have thought that the children were of little youth or importance in Christ's kingdom but we must remember that that is not the case that Christian children are important in a sense in a sense the children are the church's nursery and the church must do all in its power to ensure that this little part these little ones are God's property and that they are well looked after spiritually speaking morally speaking that we have to pray for them we have to instruct them we have to provide for them the disciples opposition may very well have arisen from wrong views of the kingdom of God remember that they thought that Jesus was going to establish an earthly kingdom and it looks at least at one point when James and John sought to have a seat on either side of Jesus in his kingdom it looks as if they were thinking of an earthly throne and Jesus as king on the throne in Jerusalem and his kingdom was going to be an earthly domain and they were thinking well what can children contribute to such a kingdom but that's not the case

Christ's kingdom is not a worldly kingdom it is a spiritual kingdom it's an eternal kingdom it is a kingdom but all who come into it must be like little children receiving what is freely offered in the gospel children accept a gift very readily a child is not too proud to accept a gift but many adults are too proud to accept the free gift of Christ the free gift of salvation through Jesus it says here let the children come to me and don't hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God people who are like children ready to receive a gift who are in themselves willing to accept what's freely offered to them the opposition may have been very surprising but

Jesus rebuked them and he called them to him saying let the children come to me and don't hinder them let the children come to me this is an amazing encouragement let the children come to me and don't hinder them you know these words are imperatives imperatives that the Lord is using when he's speaking to the disciples let the children come don't hinder them it's as if he's saying

never ever think of holding children back from coming to me we mentioned house how Hannah of old brought Samuel to the

[23 : 03] Lord in prayer for this child I prayed that's one way of bringing your children to the Lord I knew an old lady in Col we used to visit her she was housebound for many years a Christian lady and she and her sister in law were living together and they were elderly and this one was saying I'm not sleeping very well I spend hours awake through the night and you know she said what I do I pray and I pray for children who are yet unborn in the community of back children who are yet unborn well listen I thought at the time that was amazing I had never heard of anybody praying for children who are unborn but that is the case and who knows who these children were when they came into the world and when they were blessed by the

Lord it can be traced back to this old lady's prayers and that lady I believe is in glory long ago we have to bring our children to the Lord in prayer we have to bring our children under the word of God at home around the fireside read the Bible to them children's Bibles that are some of them are very well produced tell them Bible stories give them an understanding of the kind of ethic that should fill their life and direct their life that it be a biblical ethic not an ethic from television programs that are not produced in a God fearing way not an ethic by anything that is of worldly philosophy but a Bible ethic a

Bible truth take them to the church services sometimes I believe the younger the better that they grow up with the sound of the gospel in their ears take them to the Sabbath school take them everywhere that you believe it's appropriate that their soul might be nourished and their mind might be shaped according to the word of God for this child I prayed it says here whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it here he is talking I believe to adults also using the child as an illustration of ready to receive what's placed before him good gifts and we see here that we are brought to consider ourselves what true

Christian character really is are we who profess the Lord are we harmless and inoffensive like children are are we free from rancor free from bitterness free from malice are we are we meek and gentle and submissive all of these are true of children are we modest and humble are we without pride and conceit and self importance these things are true of children and if we come asking the Lord to make us what we are not he will do so and he will give us a portion in his kingdom he will give us grace to receive himself as the king of our lives and direct us in a way everlasting those who have come to

Jesus they have come to walk side by side with one who will never leave them one who will never forsake them one who knows them better than they know themselves and one who goes ahead of them by way of protecting who surrounds them by way of protecting them one who provides for all of our needs who will never let us down who will at last bring us to be with himself in heaven they brought children to him that he might touch them or that our children our young people our old people would be touched by the hand of the Lord God that he would rend the heavens and come down among us as a people that he would touch us with that healing touch with that touch whereby we receive spiritual sight and spiritual hearing and that we might be given that spiritual grace whereby we trust in

[28 : 58] Jesus as the only saviour who is able to save us from all of our sins blessings what a day these parents had when the Lord Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them what a day he will have and I will have when we are aware that the Lord's arms are about us and that the arms are full of love to us and full of grace and full of blessing that is his focus for his people blessing he said to Abraham I will bless you I will bless you blessing you and blessing you still what an amazing God we have who would keep away from him who would keep our children away from him the devil will destroy us but our saviour will heal the devil will spoil but the saviour builds up the devil hates but Jesus will love and he loves with an everlasting love all those who come to him in truth

Amen may God bless to us these thoughts