

The Kingdom belongs to such as these

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn with me again to the passage that we read in Luke's Gospel, chapter 18. I'm reading again at verse 15. We're going to read 15 down to 17 again.

Luke 18 and at verse 15. 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 little 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. Well, these verses I want to consider with you today.

And in these few verses, well, even in the first verse that we read there, verse 15, we get a really personal insight into what our Lord Jesus Christ is like.

[1 : 20] Especially if we take what Luke tells us about this and we compare it with what Matthew and Mark say about it. Because they also have these short verses included in their accounts.

And with a little bit of extra detail or a little bit of different detail. Sometimes it's so illuminating to compare the different accounts that we have in the Gospels.

And to put them together and get a really big picture. Well, we have a really personal, intimate insight into what our Lord Jesus Christ was like in these verses.

He wanted the little children to come to him. And he laid his hands on them. And he touched them. And in Mark's Gospel, in Mark chapter 10, we read, it wasn't just that he went along and touched all the little children.

He took them in his arms. And he prayed for them. And he blessed them. We learn that when we put the different Gospel accounts together.

[2 : 30] And it tells us something about our Lord Jesus. There's something really beautiful and wonderful about what he did on that occasion. And I'm sure he was doing it on other occasions.

And we see it in the way he interacted with all sorts of people during his ministry. He was always touching people. So different from the Pharisees. They kept away from people. They didn't touch people. But our Lord Jesus was always making that physical contact.

It was never him holding himself away. He was always coming close. And he took these children up in his arms.

Really, you can only do that one by one with little children. Every little one was important to him. He took them up in his arms. And we're sure, I mean, I'm maybe conjecturing a little bit here.

But I'm pretty sure he looked into every little face. And he loved that little child. And he prayed. We're told that he prayed for them.

[3 : 33] Every little child individually. As it was in his arms. So we get this really lovely insight into our Lord Jesus.

It's a wonderful few verses. But we also get a really profound insight into the gospel.

I really believe a very profound insight into the gospel. You see, when we come to a passage like this. There's always a danger of sentimentalizing it a little bit.

Because it is really cute. It really is this idea of the Lord Jesus with little children on his knees. And I'm not saying there's not a sentimental aspect to it.

There is. But we're in danger of only taking that out of it. If you say the word baby.

[4 : 35] If you're selling a product and you say baby product. You know you can pretty much charge double. If you're a retailer.

I remember when we had our first child. And everything was new. We didn't have a child before. And now a little baby was on the way. And the family were so excited.

And very kind as well. And they said. Because I was a student at the time. So we didn't really have that much. And my wife's sister said. Well we'll buy you your pram.

We'll club together. And we'll buy you your pram. You go and choose it. And such and such a person said. We'll buy this for you. And we'll buy that for you. And we were living in Glasgow at the time. And I remember going to this sort of baby place.

A big shop. A big warehouse. I didn't realize you got such things. And there was buggy stacked floor to ceiling. And you could buy all sorts of stuff. And that was pretty expensive.

[5 : 37] And you can buy a little plastic bottle for 50p in a corner shop. But you go and you say. This is for your baby. And you're probably buying the same thing. But you're going to pay two pounds for it.

Because we get a bit sentimental about babies. Of course we do. And we're just going to pay that little bit more. We can be exploited like that.

And I don't want to make sweeping generalizations. Got to be careful. But possibly mothers and grannies and aunts.

You're maybe just a little bit more vulnerable to that sort of marketing. Maybe just a little bit than the men are. You get sentimental men as well. There's no doubt about that.

But there's just that mothering instinct. And that homeliness that women have by instinct. And it's so cute. We're going to buy it.

[6 : 37] It's so cute. Well, why am I saying all this? Well, there's something really interesting in this verse. Because this wasn't just sentimental mothers bringing their children to Jesus.

The word, well, we read in verse 15. Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. Who were they? Who were they?

Can we know anything more about it? Well, the interesting thing is that the Greek word for it is masculine. They gives us the masculine word.

If you have a group of people in Greek, if you want to refer to a group of people who are men and women, well, you would use the masculine.

But if there was a group of people and they were only women, then you would use the feminine. If this was just mothers bringing their children to Jesus. If this was just mothers bringing their children to Jesus, the word would be different.

[7 : 42] But it's pretty clear here. This wasn't just about people wanting something nice for their children.

Some commentators actually take it and they say fathers were bringing their children to Jesus. And I think we can be pretty sure that there were at least many fathers among this group who were bringing their children to Jesus.

Even if it was not all fathers. That teaches us something. This wasn't just something sentimental.

The fathers bringing their children to Jesus tells us something about these fathers.

They were seeking the spiritual good of their children. And they were proactive about getting a blessing for them.

There is this duty of fathers that the Bible particularly gives to fathers. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 4. It doesn't say, well, it says children obey your parents in the Lord.

[8 : 58] But then it says fathers, don't exasperate your children. But fathers, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Fathers, that's your duty.

You are the ones particularly who have this duty to proactively teach your children. Proactively nurture your children in the Lord.

It's a very masculine thing. And it's something that's often lacking. There's all sorts of things that we men, we look at ourselves as men, can find fault with.

We can look around at our churches and generally at our society and say, have fathers taken enough initiative in bringing children to the Lord Jesus?

Have they taken enough responsibility? Well, that seems to be what's going on here. They've got these fathers and they're wanting the spiritual good for their children.

[10 : 03] They're shouldering their responsibility and they're taking them to the Lord Jesus. So it's not just sentimental. Well, we learn that the disciples rebuked them.

The disciples were annoyed with these people for bringing their children to the Lord Jesus. And they told them to stop. Why did they do that?

Well, they obviously weren't sentimental at all. But it was more than that. Were they not saying something like, these children aren't important enough? This is a waste of Jesus' time.

They probably knew he's soon to go up to Jerusalem. There were some profound things going on and some profound teaching going on.

And Jesus interacting with all sorts of people. He doesn't have time for these little children. How can it benefit them? They can't understand.

[11:08] They don't know what's going on. Come back when they're older. Bring them to Jesus when they're of age. When they're 12 or 13 or something like that.

When they're not little infants anymore. Maybe it was something like that that the Pharisee, sorry, the disciples thought. And I think they would have got that from the way that the Pharisees and the Jews generally thought about little children in those days.

Well, again, comparing Bible gospel accounts. Mark, again, tells us a little bit extra detail. He says Jesus was indignant at them.

Jesus was angry with his disciples. Because they had really missed something so important. There was the very gospel at stake in what was happening here. Jesus was angry with them. Indignant. It wasn't just that they misunderstood.

[12:10] No, Jesus was angry with his disciples for missing this point. And that also tells us there's something far more important in these verses than just little children getting contact with the Lord Jesus.

There's a gospel principle at stake. Let me look with you at verse 16. Jesus had rebuked his disciples.

Why? Well, the rebuke that he gives them is this. Jesus called them to him. That's what he called the little children.

The parents with their children. Bring them to me. And he said, let the little children come to me. And do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God belongs to children like this.

[13:20] Little children who can't understand. The kingdom of heaven belongs to little children like this. Who does the kingdom of heaven belong to?

Well, Jesus tells us it belongs to little children like this. And we know that it belongs to others.

We know that it belongs to all who the Father gives it to. But among those are little children.

How does it belong to them? How does the kingdom belong to little children? Because our Lord Jesus is really saying.

He's not just saying it belongs to grown-ups who become like little children. Because we do read in some places you need to become like a little child. But that's not really what he's saying here. He's not saying this is grown-ups who have become like little children.

[14:26] He's saying it actually belongs to little children. How does it belong to them? Because. Do they understand?

Do they even know what the kingdom of heaven is? Have they even fully grasped who Jesus is? Well.

How does the kingdom of heaven belong to anyone? I think this is the point. In these verses. This is the principle that's at stake.

It only belongs to anyone. Because God. God has sovereignly. Freely. By his own grace.

And not because they deserved it. Has given it to them. That is the only reason that anybody. Could say the kingdom of heaven belongs to me.

[15:25] Only because. God has given it. To me. This is. God's. God's. Sovereign grace.

And if we were to say. Oh but you have. No no. You have to understand. You have to really understand. What the kingdom is all about. Before you can have it.

Well we would be adding something in. We would be saying. This isn't. This isn't just free grace.

This is free grace. Plus understanding. Now. If you're of age.

And you're able to understand. Well. The Lord is. You should evidence understanding. But what if you can't. What if you don't have the capacity.

What if you're just a little child. Just a little baby. Nothing proves this doctrine. More profoundly. Than the case of little children.

[16:19] Who can't understand. What happens. This is a.

This is a sensitive question. Because I know. That there's. All sorts of. Well many people. That have had. An infant.

That has died. But. What happens. To a little baby. When it dies. Is it saved.

It's a question. People have asked. Many times. Our confession of faith. Gives an answer. It says. Elect. Infants. Dying in infancy. Will be saved. And you might say. That's a bit of a non answer. Because how do we know.

[17:16] If they're elect or not. What? Well. I suppose. They were being cautious. But they actually are giving. An answer. Because they're really saying. An infant.

That has done. Nothing good. That has. No understanding. We are sure. That there are such things. As elect. Infants. There are such little children. And they will be in the kingdom of heaven. It belongs. To them. Jesus said it. What does happen. To little children. Well. In some ways. It's. It's a little bit difficult. To give an answer. Well. I think we can give.

A fair answer. What happens to little children. Who die. When they're little children. Well. We believe some are saved.

[18:15] Maybe all are saved. Some people argue very strongly. That all are saved. Interestingly. It's. Reformed Baptists. Like Spurgeon. Really argued strongly.

All infants dying. In infancy. Are saved. Because God is merciful. And God freely. Gives them salvation. But we certainly know. From the scriptures. That. Some are saved. We certainly know that. You know the case of. Of David. King David. And he committed that terrible sin. With Bathsheba. And a child was conceived.

There had been murder. And adultery. And in the midst of it all. A child conceived. And. The Lord said that that child. Was going to die. And David.

Mourned. When the child got sick. He mourned. And he lamented. And he. Put on sackcloth. And he wouldn't eat. And. His servants. Look at him. And he said. He's distraught.

[19:15] He's falling apart. And then. When the little child died. Nobody wanted to tell David about it. Because they said.

Well. Look at how he was. While the child was alive. What's he going to be like. Now the child is dead. And. David. Realised.

Something had changed. And he asked. And they said. Yes. The child is dead. And David went. And he. Put on. Fresh clothes. And he washed himself. And he came down for food.

And they. They were confused. They said. What's going on? When the child was alive. You. You acted. So distraught. And now the child's dead. And. You're not mourning.

And David gave. A. A famous answer. He. What he said was. While the child was. Well. He said.

[20:09] While the child was alive. There was yet hope. I prayed for him. Perhaps the Lord would preserve him. But now the child is dead. He's dead. And he said this.

I will not. Go to him. Sorry. He. He will not come to me. But I will go to him. He wasn't just saying. I'm going to die too. He was saying. I'm going to be with that. Little child. One day. He had no doubt about the salvation. Of that little baby.

And you can contrast that. If you're interested with. How David was when Absalom died. Absalom. His rebellious son. Who.

Tried to seize the kingdom from him. And he. David didn't want that. Son. To be killed. Of course. He was a man by that point. David didn't want him killed. He told his men. Don't kill Absalom.

Whatever you do.

[21:06] Spare him. Be merciful to my son. And they killed him. He deserved to die. And. They killed him. And when David heard it. How he mourned.

Oh Absalom. My son. My son Absalom. Oh Absalom. My son. My son. Then he was distraught. Because that son wasn't saved.

He wasn't going to see. That son. But his little baby. Born from an adulterous relationship. He was. Comforted.

About that little baby. And we could give some other examples. There's a. There's. There's little examples. In a way they're sort of obscure. Um. But there's a few. That we can put together. I'm not going to. Really. Go into them all. Uh. Just now. Who does the kingdom of heaven belong to? Well. It belongs.

[22:02] To little children. Like. Those little children. That were being brought to Jesus. Little children. Can be saved. Why?

Because God. God. Freely. Sovereignly. Gives. Salvation. That's why. And we can't add something to that.

And we can't say. Oh but it's baptized babies. Nope. That's just not the doctrine of scripture. It's not baptized babies that are saved. And we can't add to it and say.

Oh but children of believing parents. Nope. I don't think we can add that one either. In fact there's an interesting case of. Jeroboam. Who was a wicked king. You can read about it in 1 Kings chapter 14.

And God. The prophet pronounced on him. That all his family were going to die. And they weren't even going to get buried. Because they'd all been so wicked. But the reason that he had.

[22 : 58] The reason that the prophet was saying anything about it. Was because. Jeroboam's. Child. Was lying. Dying. And they had sent to the prophet. What's going to happen? And the prophet said. All of you.

Are going to be killed. All of you are going to die. And you're not going to be buried. But he said. Accept that little child. He will die. But he will be buried. Because something good is found in him. That's fascinating. The little child that doesn't understand. God found something good in that little child. And gave him. A burial. It wasn't. He wasn't the son of a believing parent.

Although I think the scripture suggests to us. That little child was saved. Who does the kingdom belong to? It belongs to who? God.

Sovereignly. Gives it to. It's a free gift. You can go to Romans. And read about the free gift. Our Lord Jesus doesn't really talk about it much.

[23 : 59] But here. Here in these verses. I believe we have the. The teaching expounded. By example. This is about a free gift.

From a sovereign God. Well that's not where. Our profound lessons about the gospel end. Let me look at verse 17 with you.

Because our Lord Jesus doesn't leave it there. He doesn't just address the case of little children. He addresses everyone's case. The case of everyone.

Who will come. And receive the kingdom. Who does the kingdom belong to? Well it belongs to whoever. God freely gives it to.

It's a sovereign. Gracious. Gift. How do we receive the gift? Well. Jesus said. And here he's not talking about little children. He's talking about grown ups.

[24 : 55] Well. Or those of age. Those who can reason. He says. Truly I say to you. Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God. Like a child. Shall not enter it.

Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God. Like a child. Shall not enter it. Now that's. That's profound. And solemn. We want to enter the kingdom of God. Don't we?

You want to enter the kingdom of God. Surely. Well. There's a warning here. Unless you receive the kingdom of God. Like. A little child.

You will not enter it. So it's pretty important to us. That we understand. What's Jesus talking about here? Because I don't want to. I don't want to find that I'm not entering it.

Well. How does a little child receive it? You know. Jesus here. He doesn't say you have to become like a little child. He does say that in another place.

[26 : 03] He gives a teaching about humility. We have it in Matthew's gospel. Chapter 18. I think. And he talks about. Being. Becoming humble.

Like a little child. He says. If you're not humble. Like a little child. Then you won't be the greatest. In the kingdom of heaven. He was teaching his disciples. A lesson about humility. But here. He's not saying. Become like a little child.

This is a different teaching. He's saying. Receive the kingdom. Like a little child. And some people say. Well that means. Receive it humbly. Or receive it innocently.

Yeah. I don't think so. It's not. It's not. If we come humbly to Christ. That we can say. Well. I'm coming humbly. So. Now give me it.

As if my humility. Has accomplished something. And it's not even innocence. Do you know. Well there is. Obviously. There's an innocence. A naivety. About little children.

[27 : 02] But. The bible is pretty clear. They're little sinners. Right from the very beginning. Just. Look at little children. And how they operate. They're. They're. If you want an example of.

What is egotistical. Well look at a little child. It's all about me. That's something that they just.

Nobody has to teach it to them. Life is just all about me. And they have to be.

Taught. It's not all about you. And there's this folly. In the heart of the child. That the bible tells us about. And. There's sin there. And it needs to be driven out of them. They need to be. Nurtured.

And trained. Because. Instinctively. Everything's wrong. They're not. They're not. They're not pure. So that's not how we receive it. How does a child.

Receive something. I think. This lesson. That our lord gives. Is just. So. It's so. Accurate.

[28 : 02] And so amazing. He. He highlights this. Thing about children. How do they receive things. Now. I don't know what you're going to be doing tomorrow.

It may be the case. That presents will be given. And maybe some presents will be given to little children. And. Do you know what the little children are going to do. When they get their present. They're not going to be very complicated about it. They're just going to get that present. And you give it to them. And they're going to take it. And they're going to get the wrapping off it. And they're going to own that present.

It's going to be theirs. And you know. They just. They just really don't complicate it. If you give a present to an adult. But. It's a little bit different.

You know. Gift giving has some complications to it. As you get older. Because. Well. If they give a gift to me. I better give a gift to them. And if they give a gift to me.

[29 : 01] That's. Worth about. Twenty pounds. Then. Maybe I should give a gift to them. That's. Worth about. Twenty pounds. You know. We do it differently as we get older. But children just don't think about that.

When they get the gift. They don't think. Oh. I better give. This auntie a really nice present as well. They just don't think about it. They just take the present. And they open it. And it's theirs.

And they're delighted. That's what we're meant. That's. That's the way that we're meant to receive. The kingdom of heaven. We just can't overcomplicate it.

I don't know if anybody. Ever. Goes on. Money saving expert. I think it's money saving expert dot com. I'm not.

I'm not giving a plug for it or anything. But. There's a guy called Martin Lewis. And he's sometimes on. They'll interview him on TV. If there's something to do with money. Or how you look after your finances.

[29 : 56] You know. Ordinary practical things of life. And he's. Supposedly the expert. Well he wrote an article. About. About. Eight years ago. I think.

About. Giving gifts at Christmas time. And. He. He thought he was going to get. A lot of controversy about it. Because he basically said. Look we really need to. We really need to work out.

And sort out this thing about Christmas gift giving. Because a lot of it. Is wasteful. And one of the things he highlighted. Is this fact. You know. You. You give a present to such and such.

You're setting up an obligation. Because they will feel obligated. To give a present back to you.

And. I suppose he was saying. Yeah. It makes sense. Parents giving gifts to their children.

Grannies and grandpas giving gifts. That makes sense. But. Once it gets too wide. He was saying. All you end up doing is creating debt. Causing obligations. It's not really that helpful.

[30 : 50] We need to. Think it through a little bit. And. Over the eight years. Since he wrote it. I think a lot of people have been in touch with him. Saying. That's really helpful. Yeah. That makes sense. We need to.

We need to get a. A way of understanding. Gift giving. But he just. Taps into this fact. Adults feel. Obligation. Children don't.

They just don't feel it. They take the gift. And they have it. And they own it. And it's theirs. That's what Jesus means. When he says. Whoever doesn't.

Receive the kingdom of God. Like a little child. Won't enter it. It's all about how you receive it. How do you receive the kingdom of God?

Do you say. Well. I'll take it. And now. What I'll do for you. God. Or. Is. You know. And you can list all the things. That you're going to do with your life.

[31 : 45] And. And. And you're not going to be able to do it. Because. We're just sinners. Or. Or do you say. Well. I can't take that gift from you. Because look at me. Look at my life.

Look at all the things I've done wrong. I can't. I can't accept this gift. I don't deserve it. That's the whole point. I don't know. I don't know about you.

But I've never. Seen a little child say. I can't take this gift from you. Because I don't deserve it. They always.

Take the gift. And it doesn't bother them. Whether they deserve it or not. They just have it. That's the way we've got to receive the kingdom of God. We can't give anything back to God.

Well. Not in such a way that it means that we deserve the gift he gives us. Of course we. Because he's given this to us. We respond to him with love.

[32 : 43] And with obedience. By his grace. And by his help. If we can't take Christ's. Gift.

Just like that. We're not going to enter it. We're not going to have it at all. If you're sitting here today.

And you think. Well I just don't deserve it. So I can't. I can't. Take this salvation.

Yet. You're never going to take it. It's freely offered.

It really is. Freely offered. Salvation. The kingdom. God is holding it out to you. Just take it. You can't give anything back.

In return. So this passage. Is not just. Sentimental. It is cute. And it is a little bit sentimental.

[33 : 45] And you can't really read it. Without. A little bit of softness. In your heart. Surely. But it's actually so profound. This is about.

God's sovereign. Free grace. And this is about. Our. Necessity. Just to. Accept it. As he gives it to us.

Let us. Take it. Own it. Receive the kingdom. Of heaven. Well may the Lord. Bless to us.

These things from his word.