

THE RATIONALE FOR REACHING CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION:

Think with me for a moment about some of the “special days” we have on our calendar. I’m obviously not going to list them all, but here are the ones that have a connection to **families**: Mother’s Day...and Father’s Day...and Grandparents Day. I was also a little surprised to realize that two weeks from today—July 25th—there is another family-oriented Holiday. Anyone know what it is? **Parents Day!**

Ever think about the fact that missing from the list is **Children’s Day!** Unless it has been so long ago that I’ve forgotten, to the best of my recollection I have yet to have a child—even one of my own children or grandchildren—ask me, “**Why** isn’t there a Children’s Day?”

You know **why** they haven’t asked? Because most of them realize that **every day** is Children’s Day! That is especially true at our house when the **grandchildren** are around. In fact, we came up with a **one phrase song** that I often sing before—or after—“Nana” and the grandkids come back from shopping!

Want to hear it? Here goes: “Every day’s a holiday with Nana!” The funny part is that sometimes even the grandkids themselves sing it 😊!

On a more **serious** note, not **all children** are treated as special, are they? Horrible things happen to children—daily—and often in their own homes—by the people who should love them and protect them the most. That is a **fact of the daily news**—and a fact recorded in the Word of God!

Isaiah 49:15-16 “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, **they may forget**, yet will I not forget thee. ¹⁶ Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”

Sadly, you may have been one of those children who were “forgotten” ...or mistreated...or neglected—by your mother...or father...or both. My intent this morning is not to “stir up old wounds,” but to remind all of us **why** it is important to have children’s ministries like Vacation Bible School—and why spending nearly \$5400 to send children to camp is **not** a waste of money!

Please take your Bibles and turn to Mark 10:13-16.

I want us to notice first... **1. The Example of our Savior**

A. The request of the parents

V 13 “And they [presumably parents] brought young children to Him, that He should **touch** them”

Mt 19:13 “Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and **pray**.” The request, then, was for Jesus to **place His hands** on these children and **pray for them**.

Before the parents got to Jesus with their children, however, they were **headed off**—they were hindered—by Jesus’ disciples. We see that here in the end of v 13 “and His disciples rebuked those that brought them.” We see a similar statement in Mt 19:13 and Lk 18:15.

We aren’t told **why** the disciples did that, but it was probably because they felt Jesus was **too busy!** That’s **not** how Jesus felt, though. Did Jesus **commend** the disciples for screening who got to meet with Him?

No; not at all! Instead... B. Jesus rebukes the rebukers

V 14 “But when Jesus saw it, He was **much displeased**...” This was **more than** a casual annoyance. The same Greek word is used of the reaction of the 10 disciples when they heard that James’ and John’s mother had asked Jesus to grant that they would sit on each side of Jesus in His kingdom.

Mt 20:24 “And when the ten heard it, they were **moved with indignation** against the two brethren.”

Back to v14 (middle) “Suffer [permit] the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” Same thing said in Mt 19:14 and Luke 18:16.

C. Jesus' response to the parents' request

What did the parents—or care-takers—want Jesus to do? Put His hands **on them** and pray for them.

Did Jesus do that? Yes...and **no**! He actually did **more than** they asked! Jesus could have fulfilled the request of those that brought the children by putting **one hand on one** of them—and His **other hand** on another one—and then pray for them. He didn't do that, though.

V 16 "And He took them up in His arms"—meaning He picked them up. "Taking them up in His arms" carries the idea of **folding them** into His arms. Then what did He do? He put His hands upon them.

Think of the **picture here** before us. Jesus is **picking them up**—one by one—folding them in His arms, then, placing one hand on their head, He prays for them.

Another suggested meaning is that Jesus embraces the child, folding it in His arms, then sets the child down and lays His hand on the child's head and prays for them.

Either way it is **more than** what they had asked Jesus to do. And how touching would it be to see the tenderness of Jesus with His hand on **your** child's head—and hear a prayer of dedication upon **your** little one's life! What a wonderful picture of the care and love and tenderness that God has for children!

Let's consider next... **2. The Exhortation of our Savior**

Jesus didn't **just** demonstrate His love for children by His **example**; He also gave some instruction—some **exhortation**—regarding how we need to **be child-like** in order to enter into heaven!

V 15 "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he **shall not enter** therein."

In **Luke 18:17** there is a similar statement, but a bit stronger: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall **in no wise enter** therein."

So, what is Jesus saying? Is He saying that if you do not receive Jesus as your Savior when you are a **child—in age**—you will not be allowed **entrance** into heaven? Is Jesus saying that if you are not born again—and are **now a teenager or older**—that it is **too late** for you?

No; that is not what He is saying! How do we know that? Because we have numerous examples of **adults** being converted under the teaching of Jesus. **Zacchaeus** was an adult—and so was the **thief on the cross**! We also know because Jesus taught on this same subject in other passages.

One passage is Mt 18:1-6. Let's turn there; notice v 1. The setting here is different—the disciples had just asked Jesus who would be the **greatest** in the kingdom of heaven—and people were **not bringing children** to Jesus to pray for them. In fact, in v 2, we see Jesus **calling a child to Him** and proceeds to use that child as a word picture of what He was about to teach them. We see here in the next 4 verses, 4 truths from Jesus.

In the way of a reminder, Jesus taught the truth because He **was** the Truth. Jesus declares that in **John 14:6** "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." We noted last week in John 8 that Jesus didn't just claim to **tell** the truth—He also claimed **to be God**!

John 8:29 "And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do **always those things** that please Him." **Jesus never failed** to please God—**not even once**. To **never, ever fail** the God of heaven even one time means you are **perfect**. And if you are perfect; you are God—and Jesus claims that here in this verse.

Jesus made a similar statement later in the same chapter. **John 8:46** "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Think about what Jesus is saying here. Not one of you **can prove** that I have committed **even one sin—ever**! Again, I ask, who but God could say such a thing?

And we then have these solemn words from Jesus: "And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me?" Many people choose to **reject the Words** of the One who **never sinned**—and **believe the words** of imperfect, sinful men and follow their **man-made religion**. I can't help but wonder if Jesus will ask people these very words— "And if I say the truth, why did you not believe me"—before pronouncing their doom!

What are the truths we see here? Truth #1... A. Childlike humility required for entrance into heaven

We see that in v 3 “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

I think it is noteworthy that Jesus does not answer their question about greatness in heaven right away. Instead, He challenges them to make sure they are **getting in**, first! A lot to unpack in this verse.

--First, we are **not born on our way** to heaven. Think about that. “**Except ye be converted**, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” In other words, Jesus is pointing out the fact that you are not naturally on your way to heaven—you have to **do** something!

--Second, **not everyone gets into** heaven. “**Except ye be converted**, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

--There are those who **are converted** and become as little children—they **will get in**.

--And there are those who are **not converted** and do not become as little children—they **will not get in**. Pretty straightforward. But what does it mean to be **converted**—and to become as a little child?

i. To be converted

To be converted here means to **turn around**. The disciples at this point were proud and self-seeking.

They felt they were **worthy**—not unworthy!

They did not feel the **need to follow**—they wanted to lead!

They did not sense the **need to learn**—they wanted to teach!

They wanted to **be first**—not last; and to **be served**—not serve others!

Jesus was saying that instead of worrying about being the **greatest** in heaven, they needed to make sure they were going there! And in order to gain entrance, they needed to **turn around**. They needed to see their pride and self-love and self-service and **repent** of their sin!

ii. To become as little children

What does it mean to become as a little child?

--It means to be humble enough to admit we are **sinful** and can't get rid of our sin.

--It means to be humble enough to admit that we are **helpless and weak**.

--And it means to be humble enough to admit that we don't **know the way**—but we will listen to what God says!

These are the ones that will enter heaven. I want to pause here for just a minute. What about you?

--Has there been a time in your life when you **turned around**—when you stopped trusting in you and **what you could do**—because you realized that that was not going to cut it?

--Maybe you've been like the prodigal—taking what God has given you and leaving Him so you could live for yourself. The prodigal “came to himself,” though, and realized that he could not go home and **demand anything** from his father. What he **could do** though—and what **he did do**—was **ask for forgiveness!**

And just as the father was there waiting for his son to come home, God waits for us to come to Him in humility and with a desire for forgiveness. Have you ever done that?

Truth #1? A childlike humility is required for entrance into heaven

Truth #2? B. Childlike humility required for greatness in heaven

We see this in v 4 “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus is now answering the question that the disciples asked: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” In other words, who is it that will be **honored** in heaven?

My initial thought was only God and Christ will be honored in heaven, so “kingdom of heaven” must be referring to God's kingdom **here on earth**. But then I had this thought: the **Judgment Seat of Christ**—where **believers** will be rewarded for what they have done for Christ here on earth—will take place in heaven!

And who will have the **greatest rewards**? The humble! Those who are content with the place God has them....and dependent on God...and long-suffering...and meekly seek God's Word and ways...and patient...and prefers others be honored above themselves. These will be the ones considered great by God.

For the sake of time, I'm basically just going to give you the last 2 truths.

Truth #3: C. The way you treat young believers is the way you treat Christ. We see that in v 5 (read).

Truth #4: D. Woe to those who cause young believers to stumble. We see that in v 6 (read).

What is the rationale for reaching children? **Why** have VBS? Why spend \$5000 **plus** to send kids to camp?
First, because of the **example** of Jesus.

Second, because of the **exhortation**—the teaching—of Jesus.

Third, because of... **3. The Extensiveness of our Salvation**

A. The Permanence of Salvation

This is not a trick question—How long is everlasting life? **Forever!** When does it end? **It doesn't!**

Is that **only true** if we are born again **after** a certain age? *No; it is true of everyone that is a true child of God!*

Numerous verses we could turn to; notice the three I've listed on your outline:

John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸ And I **give** unto them **eternal life**; and they shall **never perish**, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath **begun** a good work in you **will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:**"

II Tim 1:12 "...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that **He is able to keep that** which I have committed unto Him against that day."

The point I'm making is this—if children are truly born again, they are children of God and belong to God.

And if they are truly God's, God the Holy Spirit will dwell within them for the **rest of their lives**.

And if God the Holy Spirit is dwelling within them, He will **woo them and work on them** to perform in them the work He started in them. What a wonderful truth and encouragement that should be!

And that leads to... B. The Potential of Service

The story goes that a friend asked D.L. Moody how a preaching service had gone. Moody replied: "Two and a half people were converted to Christ." The friend asked if he meant two adults and one child. Moody replied: "No; there were **two children** and one adult! When a child is led to Christ, a whole life is saved!"

Think of the potential of service for God that we have in these young people—these that are here on a consistent basis and those who are going to camp. We could have within our midst another D.L. Moody...or Charles Spurgeon...or George Whitfield...or George Mueller. Or we could have some who model incredible faithfulness like a Pastor of a small Baptist Church in Rock Falls, WI, that has been there close to 40 years—or John and Joyce Raehl who have been missionaries in Brazil for 45 years!

Who knows, maybe our **next Pastor** is in this group of young people! So how do we look at these children?

--Do we see them as distractors...and mess makers...and noise makers?

--Or do we see them as Christ does—precious souls that He died for with their whole life ahead of them to serve Him?

Wayne Gretzky, called by many the greatest hockey player ever, attributed some of his greatness to this motto: "I skate to where the puck is **going to be**, not where it has been."

And that is how I believe we need to look at our young people. Not where they are **right now**—but what they **can become** as they grow in their walk with God and service to God.

So what is our role **as a church** in that process? Here are a number of things that any and all of us can do:

--Pray for them... and be an example to them... and get to know them.

--A good way to get to know them is to be here during VBS to help out (pretty sneaky plug for workers, eh?)

--We can contribute to the camp fund. I read earlier this week that it is estimated that ¼ of all believers began their relationship with Christ at a Christian camp.

--Pray for me as I teach them. Jesus told Peter not just to feed the sheep—but also the lambs!

PRAY

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First and foremost, receive Jesus as your Savior if you have never done that! Remember Jesus' words: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." We are not naturally on our way to heaven—and the only ones who get in are those who receive Him.
2. Second, what is your **attitude** toward our children? Do you see them as God sees them?
3. Third, what are your actions toward our children? Do you pray for them...and try to model a good example to them...and try to get to know them?