

The Way of Jesus with Children
Mark 10:13-16

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Text: ¹³ Some people were bringing little children to Him so He might touch them, but His disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me. Don't stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ I assure you: Whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ After taking them in His arms, He laid His hands on them and blessed them.

Introduction: I believe that there is something in the Bible that can be applied to most any question of life. Even if there is not a direct statement, there is some general principle that can be applied to the specific situations of our lives. That is what I think of when I take first glance at our text today. As recorded by Mark, this particular vignette from Jesus life is surrounded by a question about divorce and a question about eternal life. I would just pause and say that here are two most important questions that occupy the attention of many.

In the midst of these lessons, Mark inserted a story about an occasion when people began bringing children to him. It's a good lesson for us today as we think about Mother's Day and as we think about the importance of dedicating families to the LORD.

What was the way of Jesus with children?

Jesus received them.

An Interruption The grammar and the context suggest that the "bringing of children to Jesus" was an interruption. The phrase "were bringing" gives the feeling that they were coming one after the other.

An Irony Not only was Jesus not bothered by the interruption, but He rebuked those who had rebuked those bringing children.

You receive what is important to you. Some of you know that a few weeks ago during a Wednesday evening fellowship meal time, we were paid a visit by then candidate for President, Newt Gingrich, on his stop to Lafayette. Many of you enjoyed meeting him and just being in the same room with someone running for President—a rare opportunity indeed. I tell you what I enjoyed most. I enjoyed watching his security detail. They were in ultimate control, not Mr. Gingrich. That is until, Mr. Gingrich saw somewhere he really wanted to be—then they lost all control. The place? The kitchen! Upon eyeing the kitchen for the first time, he immediately left those he was greeting to find a handful of hush puppies from the kitchen. You receive what is really important. The rules go away when something is really important to you.

The disciples might have been following the rules of their day that made small children insignificant, but Jesus changed the rules because the children were important.

Jesus affirmed their faith.

The disciples tried to hold the children away as an interruption, but Jesus held up the children as an example of faith. Jesus seems to be saying, “There is much to learn from the faith of a child.” Likely a child does not have all the answers to matters about God; they don’t even have all of the questions. As I think about that in the midst of some of the theological debates I have been a part of that produce more questions than answers, the faith of a child seems really rewarding.

I tell parents whose children are desiring to make their public declaration of faith through baptism that there will always be questions as to whether the child really understands. This is a matter that should not be tread upon without great discernment. For me, I always go back to a conversation I had with a Seminary classmate those years ago. After leading his eight year old to Christ, Butch told me, “I know he gave as much of himself as he could understand to give to as much as he could understand about Jesus.”

That kind of testimony is exactly why Jesus held the faith of children as an example.

Jesus blessed them.

Then, Jesus blessed them. To be honest with you—this is the part of the story that challenges me the most and that I find most intriguing. What does it mean that He blessed them? Well, for one thing, in the context of this scene, the blessing means that Jesus did more than He was asked to do. The adults (parents presumably) just wanted Jesus to touch their children. Jesus did much more. He took them in His arms, He laid His hands on them, and He blessed them.

The word blessed is used about 70 times in the New Testament. It usually has the meaning of some sort of favored status. Often, it is accompanied with a spoken word which surely takes us to the idea of prayer.

Before I preach each morning and evening, your deacons pray with me. We ask God’s blessing—His favor.

So what?

Shouldn’t we be active in bringing children to Jesus?

Why did Jesus do what He did? Two reasons, I think. First, this is the way of Jesus with all people. In a sense, He could nothing less. Second, He knew that others would be vying for the attention of children.

One last thing: Don’t be a stumbling block. (Mark 9:42)