

Mark 10:13-16

Parents, do you know where your **children** are? Those of us who **have** children understand **completely** what is behind that question. **Children** - especially **young** children - are very **quick**, and they are very **trusting**. They have the tendency to just **run off** toward **anything** that strikes their interest, whether it's **dangerous** or **not**. In a world where child **abductions** have become more and more prevalent, parents need to keep their eyes **glued** to their children, in order to make sure that they are physically **safe**. As **Christian** parents, we can also look at that question in a **different** way - in a more **important** way - because we know that the **most** important concern for **all** children is that they are safe from **sin**, from the evils which surround them in this **world**, and from the temptations of the **Devil**. We know that in order to be **spiritually** safe, every child needs to be in the arms of **Jesus** for **strength** and **protection**, and every child needs to regularly hear the **Word** of Jesus to **preserve** and to **strengthen** their faith.

So with that in mind, let's ask the question once again: **Parents**, do you know where your **children** are? Are your children **safe** in the arms of **Jesus** where they can sit and listen to His **Word**? What about the children of our **friends** and **relatives**? What about the kids who play on the same **sports team** with our children, or the children who live in our **neighborhoods**? Are they all **safe** in the arms of Jesus? Are they all regularly listening to His **Word**?

Where **are** the children of our world, and where are they **headed**? In recent years we've seen fewer and fewer children in our **congregation**, in **part** because couples are choosing to **have** fewer children than in the past. Even as we look around at the children in our **community**, it **seems** like fewer and fewer of them even **care** about learning about **Jesus**. We may not **know** where the children are **spiritually**, or where they are **headed**, or the **causes** behind their **apathy**, but there's one thing we know for **sure**. We know where **Jesus** is, and we know what **Jesus** **wants**. Jesus is **watching over** the children of this world, and He wants to **bless** them with His love. So, He tells **us**, as He told His **disciples**: **Let The Children Come To Me**.

In our text for today, people were **bringing** little children to **Jesus** in order to have Him **bless** them. But Jesus' disciples **scolded** the parents for bringing their little ones to Jesus. Maybe they thought that Jesus needed **rest** (and it's **hard** to rest around little children), or maybe they thought that Jesus had more **important** things to do (because little children **aren't** that important), or maybe they thought that the children were too **young** to receive a blessing from Him (as if you have to

be a certain **age** before Jesus can bless you). But **whatever** they were **thinking**, they were **wrong**. And Jesus **told** them so. He said, "*Let the little children come to me! Do not **hinder** them, because the kingdom of **God** belongs to such as these.*"

This is a clear **command** from our Lord Jesus. Jesus **wants** the children to **come** to Him, because He knows that they **need** Him. The Bible is very **clear**. It teaches us that **all** children are born with a **sinful nature**, even though **outwardly** they often **appear** to be completely **innocent**. Jesus said, "*Whatever is born of the **flesh is flesh**,*" and King David confessed, "*Certainly, I was **guilty** when I was born. I was **sinful** when my mother conceived me.*" But in His **mercy**, our Lord Jesus wants to **bless** all people - **including** little children. When Jesus died on the cross He paid for the sins of **all people** - old and young, male and female, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican (Independents too). Jesus **paid the price** which the heavenly Father had demanded, and He earned the **forgiveness** of sins, the right to be called God's **children**, and the gift of eternal life in **heaven**, for all people. Jesus **loves** children, and He **wants** them to **come** to Him. So, when His disciples tried to shoo them **away** from Him, Jesus immediately **corrected** them by saying, "*Do **not** hinder them,*"

Jesus **repeats** that message to us **today** as well. Parents have the **responsibility** to raise their children according to **God's will**. They can **decide** which TV shows their children watch, and which **movies** they can see. They can **prevent** their children from doing things which will be **harmful** to them. But the one thing which parents must **not** prevent their children from doing is **coming to Jesus**, and listening to His saving **Word**. It's important for parents to **bring** their children to Jesus, not just to **send** them to Jesus. That parental **example** is **vital**, because children - even **little** children - can clearly see what we view as **important** for our own lives. And if something **isn't** important to **us**, why should it be important to **them**?

Jesus said, "*Let the little children come to me! Do not **hinder** them,*" The LORD established the **family** as the basic building block of **society**, and He instructed **fathers**: "*Do not **exasperate** your children; instead, **bring them up** in the training and instruction of the **Lord**.*" Jesus also gave His **entire** family of believers the commission to, "*Go and make disciples of **all nations**, (and that includes little children) - **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to obey **everything** I have commanded you.*" **Baptism** is the **first step** in bringing our children to Jesus. It's God's way of giving us His **Holy Spirit**, and of pouring out His **grace** on our children. And it's a

step which needs to be **followed** by regular **worship** and **Bible study** in order to keep **strengthening** the precious **faith** in **Jesus** which we receive in baptism.

But Jesus tells us even **more** in order to get our full cooperation. Concerning the little children He said, "*The **kingdom of God** belongs to such as these.*" God's **kingdom** is His rule of grace and salvation in our **hearts**. Just like an **earthly**, God **blesses** His people - but **God's** blessings are the forgiveness of **sins** - and **safety** from our enemies, **Satan** and **death** - and the **joy** of knowing we've been **saved** and we're on our way to **heaven**. God **gives** His kingdom to us through His **Word**. God's **Word** announces that His Son **fought** the Devil, and **destroyed** his power. God's **Word** tells us that Jesus lived in perfect **obedience** to His heavenly Father, in order to **earn salvation** for us. And God's **Word** tells us that Jesus willingly **died** to pay for our sins, and that He **rose** again for our justification. It's that **same** **Word** of God through which He **gives** us the gift of the **Holy Spirit** - so we can have a saving **faith**, and enter the **eternal** kingdom of God.

Let's take just a moment to **examine** that faith. Faith is simply a **hand** which **receives**. It comes to God **empty**-handed - not bragging about personal **good works**, or exceptional **thinking**, or some kind of an ability to **decide** - but simply receiving **God's gift** of His **love** in Jesus. In our text, the little children came to Jesus with **nothing** but what they **were** - weak, lowly, and **dependent** children. They didn't come to **impress** Him, but rather they came to receive **His impression** on them. They came without **hesitation**, and they came without **doubts**, and in **childlike faith**, they were **safe** in the loving and steady hands of **Jesus**.

In fact, Jesus went on to say, "*Truly I tell you, anyone who will **not** receive the kingdom of God **like a little child** will **never** enter it.*" Those who seek to enter God's kingdom other than with a **childlike** faith will **not** enter it. Those who **brag** about their **good works** or high **moral** character will **not** enter it. Those who rely on their **intellect** or making the right **decision** for God will **not** enter it. The kingdom of God gives entrance only to those, who **like little children** simply **receive** from Jesus what **He** worked for - what **He** obtained by shedding His **blood** on the cross. Those who rely only on **Jesus** and **His** wisdom and **His** goodness and **His** decision for them, **will enter** into God's kingdom. In our text, the children who were **brought** to Jesus were **helpless** little **babies** - they couldn't even **walk** - and Jesus said about them, "*The **kingdom of God** belongs to such as **these**.*"

Jesus **held** those children in His arms, and He told them about His **love** for them. And Jesus wants **our** children to be just like **those** children, he wants **all** the children of our families and neighborhoods to have what **they** had. In fact, He

wants **all** of us - no matter what our **age** happens to be - to be just like those children in our text. In His kingdom, Jesus offers us a full and free **pardon** for all our sins. We simply need to **believe it**, and when we **do**, we are receiving God's kingdom **like a little child**. It doesn't **matter** if our sins are **too terrible**. It doesn't matter if we're not **good enough**, and that we don't **measure up** to God's demands. **Everyone's** sins are too terrible - **everyone** isn't good enough and doesn't measure up to God's standards. But our salvation doesn't **depend** on **any** of **us**. It depends on **Jesus**. He takes away **our sin**, and gives us **His perfection**. And as we **trust** in **Him** with childlike **faith**, we **receive** the forgiveness which He **earned** for us. Believe in **Jesus**. When we **hurt**, He will **heal** us - when we are starved for **love** and **attention**, He will **provide** it - when we need **shelter** from storms and troubles of life, He will **protect** us. **Children** of God, we are **safe** for **all eternity** in the loving arms of Jesus. Jesus said: **Let The Children Come To Me**, so let's **share** that loving Savior with **all** the children of the world. Amen.