

Scripture: Mark 10:1-16

Text: Mark 10:13-16

Let the Little Children Come to Me!

Beloved in Christ, it matters how we see children of believing parents, because it matters to God. Do babies, children who are born to Christian parents belong to Christ? Or should Christian parents see their children as 'not as members' until they believe and are baptized?

What is Christ's teaching regarding children of believing parents – do they belong to Christ or do they not? In Mark 10:13-16, we hear our Savior's teaching regarding the place of children [the children of covenant parents, that is!] in the Kingdom of God.

In His tender instruction to us, "Let the little children come to Me" we hear,

1. The Call of the King [vv. 13-14, 16]
2. The Condition of Entering into His kingdom [v.15]

1. The Call of the King [vv.13-14, 16]

What is His call? "Let the little children come to Me..." By way of context, Jesus has just been speaking about marriage. And He concludes with this instruction, "Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate" (v. 9).

We discover in verse 13 that they were bringing little children to Jesus. Who are the 'they?' It likely refers to the parents of these little ones who were part of the crowds listening to Jesus about marriage. And now they are eager to bring their little children to Him. Luke 18:15 uses the words, "infants."

Big or small house, we don't know. But one thing we know is that there was a continual flow of covenantal parents coming with their little ones. Literally, verse 13 says that they "kept on" bringing their children to Jesus.

Now why are they coming in to Him like a continual stream?
"so that He might touch them" (v.13b). Beautiful!

There is nothing magical about Jesus' touch. It is clear from verse 16 that that His 'touch' was a means of conveying a **blessing**. They are bringing their children to the King and Mediator of the covenant in whom alone are all the blessings of the kingdom. What are those blessings? Essentially, the blood of Jesus to cover their sins and the promise of eternal life.

In verse 16 we see a delightful picture. As the parents bring their children to Jesus, He takes each one, one by one in turn, into His arm. And with the other hand, He touches their head and blesses them – yes, one by one. And yet how to the disciples respond?

They rebuke the parents (v.13)! Their sense here is that as moms and dads "kept on" bringing their children to Jesus, the disciples "kept on" shooing the parents away from the door of the house. Why so?

Perhaps they did not want Jesus to be bothered by them. After all, they were just little ones! They don't understand!

When Jesus sees the disciples trying to chase moms and children away, Jesus is displeased with His disciples. Jesus stops speaking. He turns to His disciples, saying, 'What do you think you are doing? Don't stand in their way!' Jesus says, "Let the little children come to Me!"

In Christian baptism, likewise, parents bring their little ones to Jesus. In baptism, God, as it were, reaches down with His hand and touches the little child on the forehead, [using water], saying, 'You are Mine. You belong to Me. My promises also belong to you: the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood and the Holy Spirit who gives faith.' From very young on up, the mark of His touch is on them. They belong to Jesus, not to Satan.

Some may object, even stand in the way, saying, 'They don't understand. Let them decide when they are older.' But it's God's decision to include them in His covenant. This is His call, "Let the little children come to Me!"

In baptism, God reaches out to the child with His promises of love and salvation because the child is not able to reach out to Him (to decide). God shows us, by way of this visible mark [stamp], the truth about the way He always works. He is the One who always makes the first move, because we can't and won't. How will the child repent and believe unless God gives it? God's touch shows that He is able! God is willing!

"Let the little children come to Me. Do not forbid them". No, the little ones don't understand, but Christ our King does. That's why the parents listen to Jesus' call and bring their little ones to Him to bless them. They know that Jesus really loves them and He gives His life for them.

How does the Lord touch and bless little children who belong to Jesus? Jesus blesses children through you -- moms, dads -- first of all -- to lead your blessed ones to Him. It's so important to give time to your children, especially when they are young. You, parents, are the first teachers of your children. God has entrusted your children to you to raise, teach, nurture for Him. Jesus says, "Let the children come to Me." He will help you. He equips you for this important task.

It's great to hear the testimony of parents being blessed in spending more time with their children at this time of social distancing!

Some Christian parents make no time. It's not so important to them to raise their little ones for the Lord. They want the church and the school to do it for them. Like the disciples, they stand in the way, from Jesus touching their little ones. It displeases Jesus. Their children are not important enough to raise for the Lord at home. So they miss out on the blessing.

And later, many wonder what happened to their children and why!

JC Ryle, a nineteenth century pastor, says "They are never too young to learn evil and sin... we cannot begin too soon to endeavor to bring them to Christ." Invest in them. It's the most important investment you can make in your life! Read the Bible with them [supper time?], pray with them, teach them, talk with them, discipline them, and nurture them. "Let the little children come to Me". Remind them of Jesus' call! Call them to trust on Jesus and His sacrifice for their sins. In this way Jesus blesses children through you and touches their hearts through you. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, the Lord instructs parents, "These commandments

that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (NIV).

Yes, your church and Christian school have an important role in obeying Jesus' call: "Let the children come to Me." . They build on the foundation of the home. The home can't do without the church or the Christian school. These assist, support, even fortify the home, making it stronger. This is why we have Hope Academy. This is also one of the benefits of Sunday worship and fellowship. Some think it's not important for children to be at worship. They say, 'they don't understand.' But Jesus says, "Let the children come to Me." Don't stand in their way. This displeases Him! He touches through His Word and by His Spirit, sometimes in ways we never expect. Don't let your children miss out on the blessing of Jesus!

As parents, you are as privileged as these mums and dads in Jesus' day, even more so – bringing children to Jesus for His kingdom blessing. Teach them how to respond in faith and love!

This brings us to our second point

2. The condition for entering His kingdom [v.15]

Having spoken about these children, Jesus goes on to speak about everyone ["whoever" in verse 17]. Jesus uses children as an illustration now.

The only way to enter the kingdom of God is by receiving His promises in faith. Receive it like these little children received Jesus' love, as a free and gracious gift. This brings us to verse 15. Using strong words, Jesus says to His disciples, 'If you don't receive the kingdom of God like a child, you will not enter it.'

Does Jesus use these children as an illustration because they are innocent and pure? If this is so, is Jesus then saying that the condition for anyone entering the kingdom is by being innocent and pure? But, then, no one will enter into life.

Who among us is innocent and pure? No one.

Jesus, however, is not stressing the innocence of children but their helplessness. In this story, the children are totally helpless, with absolutely nothing to bring. Our Belgic Confession, Article 15, reminds us that the sinful nature we inherit from Adam, our first parent, "even infects small infants in their mother's womb."

We must come to Jesus like a little child, utterly helpless, having no merit, having no claim to enter the kingdom.' But we must also come like a child, repenting, trusting and believing. If you don't receive the kingdom of God as a little child, you will by no means enter it, Jesus says in the strongest of terms. We must receive the kingdom openly, trustingly, confidently, readily as a child accepts it.

One commentator tells the story of gold pieces that were piled up on an outside window sill. "Take One," said the sign. All day long people passed by thinking, "This fellow can't fool me." They did not dare to take it. Evening fell. The owner was about to remove the pile. But just before he did, a child came by, read the sign, and calmly, and without any doubt, took one!

Likewise, Christ freely offers His salvation –freely – far more precious than gold. His promises – all of them – are yours, if you 'take' them by faith!

As parents, hold out Christ's promises to your children:

"take it!" Remind your children of God's promises when they received His stamp in their baptism. Be encouraged: as you raise your children, depend on God and on the strength of the promises He gave to them in their baptism. Pray for your children.

Do warn them, 'if you reject Jesus, my son, my daughter, God's mark will work against you. Then you are not safe in this world nor for eternity.' But, then, hold out His promise to them. Boys and girls, Jesus is so close to you. You don't remember but He took you in His arms. Listen to Him, trust Him, follow Him. You are safe in His everlasting arms!

To all of you, God uses the sign in your baptism to strengthen your faith. How are you responding to Him? The stamp on you doesn't go away. Thank God! When tempted to leave God and His ways, God by His Holy Spirit reminds you of His stamp on you, "no, no, no – not that way, but this way, Remember My promises. I have purchased you with My blood and given you My grace and Spirit to walk in My ways. Don't be unbelieving, but believing." Let your children see Jesus' call to them in your life, "Let the little children come to Me."

In our day and age, many are not having children because of all the bad things in our world. They have no where to bring their children. But you do – that is you who believe on Christ. Jesus says, "Let the little children come to Me." May the Lord continue to raise up boys and girls, young men and women fearless in their faith in the Lord and His promises. Amen!