

## **Let the Little Children Come to ME**

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### **Texts:**

"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them." Mark 10: 13-16

"Then little children were brought to Him that He might put *His* hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid *His* hands on them and departed from there." Matthew 19: 13-15

"Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to *Him* and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Luke 18: 15-17

### **The Hook:**

What an amazing text this is! This is a truly amazing text about a truly amazing moment in the life and ministry of Christ! As I have pondered over this text all week, I found it has much to teach us. I hope you will be as blessed as I was as we look at this wonderful passage of scripture today.

This wonderful account of our LORD Jesus blessing the little children comes near the end of HIS pastoral and heart-warming ministry. Jesus had a 3½ year-long ministry here on earth, and this occurs when he was on the last wave, headed into the city that GOD loved. HE was on the final, single-minded mission to Jerusalem, the City of The LORD GOD when the Gospel of Mark recorded that people were bringing their children to HIM so that HE might touch and bless them. Jesus felt this precious moment with the little children was of such importance that HE takes this pit stop along the way to touch and bless these little children.

It is precisely here, at this moment, that HIS disciples got a little frazzled in the tumult of all that was happening and rebuked those who were bringing their children. (Mark 10: 13)

It is not surprising that Jesus' disciples tried to stop them. They were no doubt thinking Jesus had more important things on HIS mind, and everything Jesus was trying to do. But Jesus (oh I love all these "BUT"s in the scriptures), being greatly displeased (the original Greek would be translated as "indignantly"), said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Mark 10: 14-15 "And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them." Mark 10:16

Interestingly, many people, the world over, overlook this incredible passage of Jesus blessing the children in the Gospels because many believe it carries no theological weight, or importance, or to so many others it just seems to lack significance.

Actually, Jesus was doing something here so very significant, and you are going to find this hugely amazing, that Jesus stops along the way to Jerusalem to have this wonderful moment in the lives of these children! So significant, now think about this, HE takes this divine detour, in the midst of HIS final mission, to stop and bless these children!

Looking over the Old Testament, and the Hebrew scriptures fathers blessed their children. Did you know that? This is an ancient custom from Noah blessing Shem and Japheth (Genesis 9: 18-27) to Abraham blessing Isaac (Genesis 24-27. Abraham passed on the blessing as GOD had blessed him, and Isaac blessed Jacob, (Genesis 25: 5 & Genesis 25: 11, g27) who then blessed his sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel.

These types of spiritual blessings were very important in the Jewish culture and mind-set. It was a tradition in the time of Jesus that fathers would intentionally bring their children to the local synagogue. "Synagogue" in Hebrew, means "the House of Prayer", and is considered the community house of worship. So, fathers would intentionally take their children to the House of Prayer to have this holy act done for their children. It was here that the traditional prayers for the child were that they would become "famous in the law, faithful in marriage and abundant in good works". This was what the parents desired for their children. It was there the father would lay his hands on the child's head and the elders of the synagogue would surround them and bless the child. What a beautiful sight!!! It was a very special moment, not only in the life of the family, but for the whole community, as it was often a public community event.

Now, in our story here, people were bringing their children to Jesus (Mark 10: 13), which would seem consistent with this type of blessing. This means that they recognized Jesus as an important Rabbi, or Teacher.

Did you all notice the fact that Jesus put HIS hands on them and blessed them? (Mark 10: 16) This is very important! This is absolutely stunning for one reason, because this is something that the teachers, Scribes and Pharisees of that day never did! They would never touch anyone. Do you know why? They made it a point never to touch people ever at all because they believed that touching someone would defile them, (Matthew 23:4, Luke 11: 46). Think about his now, Jesus actually TOUCHES these children! That is a beautiful fact!! HE is going right in the face of all the teachers of the day!! They believed that touching the sick would defile them, touching a leper would defile them, touching the lame or blind would defile them.

HE did what the Scribes and Pharisees of the day would not. Jesus never held HIMSELF back from people in that way. Jesus went against that teaching. In the scriptures you will frequently encounter Jesus touching and healing the poor, the sick and the "untouchables". Even late into the night Jesus could be seen touching the lame, the sick and the sinners. "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Matthew 9:35. "For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him." Mark 3: 10

So, Jesus touching and blessing the little children was wonderfully significant, and very important act in the economy of GOD.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus never pronounced a blessing on anyone other than a person He said belonged in the Kingdom of GOD, for HE says, "the Kingdom of GOD belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14) To say that the Kingdom of GOD "belonged to children" ran head-first in the face of all religious beliefs and Judaism of the day!!

The scribes and Pharisees were convinced that if you did not somehow do something to earn your way to heaven by doing good works, then you had no hope to go there. In their view children were unable to earn anything as they did not yet know the difference between right and wrong. Isn't that amazing?

With this stunning and wonderful act of blessing these little children, Jesus was communicating a radical new idea that can be summed up in one word. GRACE!!! Grace, by definition is receiving GOD's wonderful favour though it is undeserved! G= GOD's R= Riches A= at C= Christ's E= Expense. Unmerited favour!

Because of this, our tradition of blessing and dedicating our children will go on.

## **The Book:**

When Karen & I were first married we had 4 theories about marriage and raising children, now that we have been married a while, we have 4 children and no theories. Isn't it amazing how experts can never predict every situation that can arise concerning the raising of children?

Have you ever thought of dedicating your children to GOD? Children are a precious gift from GOD. Yes, we must recognize that they belong to GOD.

GOD is already responsible for their design and already knows HIS plans and purposes for them. Having lovingly created each one, HE knows how they will act, and what is in their future. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29: 11

GOD is asking us here to trust HIM, to give HIM our future, to lay our heart on HIS altar.

Today HE asks two couples to trust in HIM by placing their children on HIS altar and giving them back to HIM!!

There are many biblical examples of this in the Old and New Testament scriptures, but I will mention only three of the best known examples.

Of course, there is the classic example of Hannah, who having prayed for and waited for many years, finally received a son, Samuel, and then sacrificially took him to the temple to be trained as GOD's servant. "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore, I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." So they worshipped the Lord there." 1 Samuel 1: 27 & 28. This was likely the most heart-wrenching act she ever endured. She did it because she loved The LORD and knew Samuel was a gift from HIM.

Naturally, you know about Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to the temple 8 days after his circumcision, which would have occurred just 8 days after he was born. "Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord." Luke 2: 22

And we all know the story in Genesis 22 of Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac was the son for whom they had waited so long. Isaac had been a miracle baby. Sarah was about 90 years old, and Abraham was 100! Imagine! This was the child promised to Abraham, and now GOD asks him to take their only son and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. This would be very hard. Take your only son whom you love and sacrifice him. It must have been utterly incomprehensible to them!

Well, as I looked over this message, Karen & I have had 4 children and each one was presented and dedicated to The LORD when they were very young, and I'm so glad we did it. It is marvellous to see what GOD has been doing and is still doing in their lives and I wouldn't trade it for anything in this life!!!

Do you know the best thing that Abraham ever did? It was a small thing, but it was at the same time a huge thing! He gave his son back to GOD. If he had not offered Isaac, Isaac would have lived and died in obscurity, and forfeited all the bounty of GOD. But because Abraham followed through, Isaac received the full bounty of GOD's blessing and promise and became a very wealthy man. Jesus was actually born out of the lineage of Isaac. And Isaac's life, through Jesus, is still having a positive impact on many people today.

So, this is the most important thing we, as parents, can do, this wonderful thing of dedicating our children to The LORD for HIS wonderful purpose in their lives. It sets them up for future success.

When a couple does this, it displays your dedication to God This shows not only a love for GOD, but for each other and their children. That is what Abraham demonstrated. He was willing to give back the son he loved to show devotion and obedience to GOD.

Next dedicating your children is a clarification of ownership. It is a recognition that this child comes as a gift from GOD. Dedicating your child shows that you recognize that this precious child belongs to and is loved by GOD. This child is a gift from GOD, and you as parents have the privilege of training up this child in the way she/he should go. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

Remember, each one is a very precious gift from GOD, as it says in Psalm 127, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit if the womb is a reward." This tells us that our children are GOD's property. We do not often think of our them in this context. They are not ours, but are GOD's property, and it is our responsibility to pray for them and teach them who GOD is.

Well, it is a lovely dedication ceremony, but it is also a godly commitment to be Christ-honouring parents and raise our children to know GOD and know Christ as their Saviour!

You see, we can have the dedication, and that is all well and good. We can have this wonderful moment, but friends, listen to me, they still need to know who Jesus is!! They still need to know HE is The Saviour, that HE died on the cross for them to conquer sin and death for them.

I was dedicated as an infant, but more importantly, my mother led me to give my heart to Jesus at the early age of 6. She faithfully taught me who Jesus is, and helped me pray, and I accepted HIM into my life. It was something so simple, there were no bells or whistles, but it was a galvanizing moment in my life! I have never forgotten that moment. I will never forget that moment and my life has never been worse for it. It has been beautiful because I know that GOD is with me, leading me in every step of my life!

It is our duty as parents to teach our children early to love and obey GOD. Deuteronomy 6:7 tells us "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. " It says to impress this upon your children. It is an intentional act to impress them. It requires diligence. It is hard work. It takes determination, but it is truly worth it!

So, I have some parting thoughts for all of you parents here today:

Parents, take your children to church. Don't send them on the bus, but actually bring them to church with you. Set the example! Show them devotion and obedience to GOD!!

Parents, I urge you to love this child in every circumstance. Take time to be with them and show them love by being present with them. I can't tell you how many late nights I spent driving around Lake Simcoe, with coffee, just talking to my children. I didn't care about work coming up or how tired I was. If my children needed me, I was there. It was inconvenient. It was a sacrifice, but worth every moment!!

Parents, pray for your children. Pray for them constantly, not just once and say, "That's it. I've done my duty." Make a point to pray for them constantly in every circumstance and in every hour!

Parent, this is an important one, stay married for your children. This is huge! There are many reasons, to teach love, trust and commitment for starters. Please, parents, stay married for this child.

Make your home a holy place. Make it a sanctuary, make it a refuge. Make it a place of fun. Make it a place to be themselves. Make it a place of adventure with The Almighty! Don't make it a place of drudgery and duty, but a place of adventure with The Almighty GOD! Please hear me on this one!

Don't get locked into the world so that everything becomes the world! Take some time with your children just to be yourself and let them be themselves with Mum and Dad.

Do what you have to do to make it fun! Take some time to go and buy some ice cream, even eat the whole bucket, I don't care! Don't worry about the calories! The doctor will know about it later anyway!! Have some fun with your children!

Joshua, when he was ready to go into that promised land, said, "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." " Joshua 24:15

Do this! Commit yourself! Define it in your soul and follow the LORD!! I have met many who let this get lost along the way. Be sure you follow the LORD!! HE has never led anyone astray yet! HE has never failed anyone yet!!!

### **The Took:**

By dedicating your children today, Rebecca, Kyle, Jeremy and Andrea, do you know what you have done? Let me tell you We know your children have free will, but today you have stacked the odds in their favour.

You are posturing these children to receive GOD's very best for their lives. Who wouldn't want that?!! Please hear me on this! You are posturing them to receive the very best of Christ, the very best of their life!

Little Charles may grow up to become the very best evangelist and Brooklyn may grow up to become a famous missionary. We don't know, but GOD knows!!!

Let me now have a final moment with all of you here today. You may not have any children, or grandchildren, but you can dedicate your heart to the LORD. You can change. You are just one decision away from making the greatest decision of your life! Just one decision away from offering your heart to GOD! The heart is very important to GOD, so you are just one step from changing where you will spend eternity. You are only one step from changing the course of your present life.

GOD love it when parents step out in faith and make the choice to give their children back to GOD. HE is just loving it when people trust HIM and open their hearts and submit themselves to HIM and give their life to HIM!!! This is what GOD loves!!!!

GOD is always here, always with us. HE sees what we are doing today. HE sees our heart. Did you know you could step out in faith and be a child of GOD? Would you dare to step out in faith and be a child of GOD? You can dedicate your heart to GOD here and now! You can rededicate your heart to GOD right now!! You can do that too! Age is no restriction! You can come now!!!

## **Post Notes:**

"And he said: "Blessed *be* the Lord, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant." Genesis 9: 26-27

"And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac." Genesis 25: 5

"After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi." Genesis 25: 11

"Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan." Genesis 28: 1

"And He was King in Jeshurun, When the leaders of the people were gathered, All the tribes of Israel together. "Let Reuben live, and not die, *Nor* let his men be few." And this he said of Judah: "Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, And bring him to his people; Let his hands be sufficient for him, And may You be a help against his enemies." And of Levi he said: "*Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, Whom You tested at Massah, And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah, 9* Who says of his father and mother, 'I have not seen them'; Nor did he acknowledge his brothers, Or know his own children; For they have observed Your word And kept Your covenant. They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, And Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You, And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar. Bless his substance, Lord, And accept the work of his hands; Strike the loins of those who rise against him, And of those who hate him, that they rise not again." Of Benjamin he said: "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, *Who* shelters him all the day long; And he shall dwell between His shoulders." And of Joseph he said: "Blessed of the Lord *is* his land, With the precious things of heaven, with the dew, And the deep lying beneath, With the precious fruits of the sun, With the precious produce of the months, With the best things of the ancient mountains, With the precious things of the everlasting hills, **16** With the precious things of the earth and its fullness, And the favour of Him who dwelt in the bush. Let *the blessing* come 'on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him *who was* separate from his brothers.' His glory *is like* a firstborn bull, And his horns *like* the horns of the wild ox; Together with them He shall push the peoples To the ends of the earth; They *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim, And they *are* the thousands of Manasseh." And of Zebulun he said: "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, And Isaachar in your tents They shall call the peoples *to* the mountain; There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; For they shall partake *of* the abundance of the seas And *of* treasures hidden in the sand." And of Gad he said: "Blessed *is* he who enlarges Gad; He dwells as a lion, And tears the arm and the crown of his head. He provided the first *part* for himself, Because a lawgiver's portion was reserved there. He came *with* the heads of the people; He administered the justice of the Lord, And His judgments with Israel." And of Dan he said: "Dan *is* a lion's whelp; He shall leap from Bashan." And of Naphtali he said: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, And full of the blessing of the Lord, Possess the west and the south." And of Asher he said: "Asher *is* most blessed of sons; Let him be favoured by his brothers, And let him dip his foot in oil. Your sandals *shall be* iron and bronze; As your days, so *shall* your strength *be*." *Deuteronomy 33: 5 - 25*

*"saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Matthew 23: 2 - 4*

*" And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers." Luke 11: 46*