

Let the Children Come to Me

Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 18:15-17



Big Idea

There's something in the fallen hearts of men and women that prizes autonomy, self-sufficiency, and independence. But such things run counter to the kingdom of God. Indeed, they will keep us from ever truly entering it. Jesus says that the kingdom belongs to the likes of infants—people who have nothing to offer but their great need and nothing to hold out but a beggar's hand.

(1) Jesus Dignifies What We Devalue (vv. 15-16)

“The modern West generally regards the qualities of childlikeness—innocence, trustfulness, humility—as inherently praiseworthy, and hence tenderness to children as virtuous. The ancient world did not regard children likewise. In Judaism, women and children derived their position in society primarily in relation to adult males. Sons were of course regarded as blessings from God, but largely because they ensured the continuance of the family for another generation. In general, ‘childhood’ was an unavoidable and uncelebrated interim until the young were mature enough to bear children and contribute to the work force. One will search ancient literature in vain for sympathy toward the young comparable to that shown them by Jesus” (PNTC).

If you want to know what Jesus truly feels about those helpless and devalued and marginalized, as children in His day were, you just need to look at how He treats them here. There are two things in particular to bring out: (1) He calls them to Himself (v. 16a); and (2) He touches them (v. 15a).

There is something to this touch. It pictures just how close Jesus is willing to get to the unclean, the sinful, the oppressed, the marginalized. In fact, with Christmas upon us, I feel it especially appropriate to point out that Jesus will do more than merely touch humanity in our place of need, right? He will take it all on Himself and ultimately give His life for our healing. The clearest indication that Jesus values little children is the fact that He Himself became one. He didn't just *call to*, He *came towards*. He didn't just *touch*, He *took on*. And He does all of this so that He can save.

(2) Jesus Devalues What We Dignify (v. 17)

Here we see that Jesus says we must not only be concerned for these little ones, we must actually become like them! Not only should we stop hindering them from coming to Jesus we should start learning from them *how* to come to Jesus!

Question #1: What Does It Mean?—While on the one hand, Jesus is saying we cannot earn the kingdom in our own strength, He is, on the other hand, expressing just how happy He is to freely give it. While He is here pointing to the insufficiency of our own efforts and abilities, He is at the same time pointing to the all-sufficiency of God's effort and ability on our behalf. That is the gold-plated truth in all of this. Yes, it hurts to say, “I can't,” but what an amazing thing to come into the realization that He can and already has!

Question #2: How Does It Happen?—(1) It Often Begins with Hardship and Trial; (2) It Always Requires the Regenerating Work of the Spirit; and (3) It Ultimately Leads to Greater Dependence upon Jesus.

Reflection Questions



- When's the last time you got “indignant” (cf. Mark 10:14) over injustice being done to another? When's the last time you really marshaled all your energy and resources in concern for someone else's needs? How might God be calling you to be an agent of grace in a hurting person's life even now?
- How do you feel about children? What do you appreciate about them? What is hard about them? Why do you think Jesus is holding them out as examples of what we must become if we are to truly enter the kingdom of God? How does such a thing make you feel—troubled, encouraged, angry, relieved?
- How have you experienced the “inverse maturation process of the children of God”? How have you been growing not towards greater *independence* but *dependence*? In what ways are you still struggling with this?