

Matthew 19:13-15: Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,¹⁴ but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went away.

Intro: Jesus is teaching us what it means to be His disciples & follow Him. He has shown us what this looks like in the marriage relationship. Today, Jesus shows us how His followers ought to think about children, how to love children by bringing them to Jesus, & how they ought to imitate the humility of children. Next Sunday, Lord willing, we'll see more about our need to be utterly dependent on Jesus & follow Jesus with our possessions, & there's a great contrast next week with what we see today. Today, we see helpless, needy children who are utterly dependent on their parents & on God for everything they need. Next week, we'll see a rich young ruler who trusted in his self-sufficiency. Parents should diligently bring their children to Jesus, & Jesus comes for the humble, weak, needy, and dependent – He comes for children and all who humble themselves like these little children.

1. People Brought Their Children To Jesus And Jesus Wants Children To Be Brought To Him

Matthew 19:13-15: Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,¹⁴ but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went away.

It's good that parents recognize their children need Jesus! Parents, do you realize this? All are sinners! **GOSPEL!**

We should bring our children (babies & up to 12 years old) to Jesus today! How do we do this?

Twelve Ways We Should Bring Our Children To Jesus

1) We bring our children to Jesus through discipline: **Proverbs 13:24:** Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Proverbs 23:12-14: Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.¹³ Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.¹⁴ If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

2) We bring our children to Jesus through His Word: Read the Word; Teach the Gospel; Memorize the Word

3) We bring our children to Jesus through prayer: We pray for them and teach them to pray! These parents brought their children to Jesus so that He might lay His hands on them and pray for them! That's a great prayer today!

4) We bring our children to Jesus through theological instruction: Explain the Word; Catechism; Books; Questions

5) We bring our children to Jesus through family worship/devotions: Do you set time aside for this?

6) We bring our children to Jesus through bringing them to church: This is vital for your child's growth!

Luke Engstrom: The greatest blessing my parents gave me? Bringing me Sunday after Sunday, morning and evening, to the same church for 18 years. Even when I desperately desired to attend my 10:00 a.m. championship soccer games. For that, I'm eternally grateful . . . Would you ever attend a wedding without the bride? Of course not! Then why do we try to get Jesus without the church?

7) We bring our children to Jesus through the way that we live: We must set the example for them! We must walk with Jesus! We must humble ourselves & confess sin to our children & show them what it means to follow Him!

8) We bring our children to Jesus through education: The main reason your children need to learn to read & think is so that they might know Christ. Do you make educational choices based on their greatest need: to know Christ?

9) We bring our children to Jesus through warnings: To warn someone about sin & death & hell is loving!

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

10) We bring our children to Jesus through joy: **Ed Moore:** Have fun with your children; Delight in God with your children; Show them that God's way is the best way and the most joyful way!

11) We bring our children to Jesus through love: Make sure your children know how much you love them.

Ed Moore: Use Expressive Words With Obnoxious Frequency In Order To Communicate Love. My father never had a father. His father left when he was 6-months-old. My dad was the only kid in town without a father. He had no model in front of him at all. I've heard guys blame their bad dad for their being a bad dad. But I say that's hogwash. My dad had no idea how to be a dad. All he knew was that he loved his kids, and he said it all the time. He said, "I love you. I'm thankful to be your dad." Every night before I went to sleep, he would put his hand on my head, he would kiss me, and he would tell me he loved me. He said everything that needed to be said every single day. So, every day, tell your kids you love them. It's a godly thing to do.

12) We bring our children to Jesus through trust in God: We must ultimately trust God with our children because He alone can change their hearts and finally bring them to Jesus: He draws and grants repentance & faith in Jesus!

Ed Moore: He knows parents who are better parents than him, yet the children turn away from God. He knows parents who seemed to do everything wrong, yet the children are following Jesus! Salvation is of the LORD!

2. Jesus' Disciples Try To Stop The People From Bringing Their Children To Jesus

Matthew 19:13: The disciples rebuked the people

Children were viewed as unimportant. Maybe the disciples thought these parents and their children would be a distraction to Jesus' mission? Maybe they didn't think Jesus had time for this? In that day many children died before the age of 12 – some estimate up to 50%! So why spend time on them? - could have been a thought. These are terrible thoughts though!

May we not be like the disciples and hinder our children from coming to Jesus! We hinder them by failing at those 12 ways of bringing our children to Jesus. We hinder them by helping them fall in love with the world and their own flesh more than trusting and loving Jesus. Are you helping your child be more dedicated, committed, and excited about anything more than Jesus? Education; Sports; Many hobbies/activities? Smart phones for children?

3. Jesus Wants Children To Come To Him Because The Kingdom Of Heaven Belongs To Them

Matthew 19:14-15: but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went away.

a. Jesus commands His disciples to let the little children come to Him and not to hinder them: Jesus was upset about this! **Mark 10:14:** When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

This is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus is said to be angry like this! **James Edwards:** Jesus' displeasure here reveals his compassion and defense of the helpless, vulnerable, and powerless. **[Jesus loves us!]**

b. Jesus laid His hands on them: This is a way of giving these children His blessing: **Genesis 48:14, 20:** And Israel stretched out his right hand & laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, & his left hand on the

head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn) . . . ²⁰ So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim & as Manasseh.'"

c. The reason Jesus gives for allowing the children to come to Him is because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them: What does it mean that the kingdom of heaven belongs to these children?

1) It doesn't mean we should baptize our infants: There is no baptism or water in our text! It's more of a dedication

2) It doesn't mean that the children Jesus prays for and blesses are excluded from the blessing of Jesus: Whatever blessing and prayer Jesus gives here belongs to both the children Jesus blesses in this passage and to all who are humbly willing receive it like they receive it (as helpless, needy beggars): (toiouton – for to such belongs . . .)

Mk 4:33 With many such parables (mustard seed) he spoke the word to them

Paul Jewett (*Infant Baptism & The Covenant Of Grace*): The Greek (toiouton) by no means implies the exclusion, but rather the inclusion, of the ones mentioned. When the Jews cried out against Paul (Acts 22:22), "Away with such a one (toiouton)!" they could hardly have meant, Away with someone like this man Paul. Rather, they meant, "Away with Paul and everyone of his kind!" By the same rule, when Jesus bade little children to come to him, "for such is the kingdom of heaven," he most likely meant, "The kingdom belongs to these children and all others who are like them in that they have a childlike faith." The truth that the kingdom belongs to the childlike should not prejudice the affirmation that it also belongs to children.

3) There are two ways that the kingdom belongs to these children can be understood: (a) To have the kingdom of heaven/God belong to you is nothing short of eternal salvation in God's kingdom & this applies only to these specific children that Jesus actually, in person, blesses and prays for in our text.

Matthew 5:3, 10: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven . . . Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Eternal salvation in God's Kingdom belongs to these specific children Jesus blesses in this passage. And why does the kingdom of God belong to them? Because they are being brought to the King! The King is in their presence! The King of the Kingdom of God is in their presence (& He is God!) & His passion is to take these little babies in His arms & pray for them and bless them! And those whom the King of kings blesses will never be cursed!

Eternal salvation in God's Kingdom does not necessarily belong to all children: (John MacArthur) But all children don't have the privilege and honor that these children had! This is a one time, redemptive-historical event that Jesus is going to use as an object lesson for His disciples and all of us. (We must all humble ourselves like children!)

(b) To have the kingdom of heaven/God belong to you can mean that you enjoy the privileges of the gathered congregation of believers. Remember in one sermon I preached on the kingdom of heaven, I gave you seven ways the kingdom of heaven can be understood (Brian Schwertley):

1) Sometimes the phrase "kingdom of heaven" refers specifically to the visible church

2) Often "the kingdom of God" is used as an equivalent to eternal life or salvation

3) The "kingdom of God" is also used in the sense of a future salvation

4) The "kingdom of God" can refer to the reign of Christ within the hearts of believers

5) The expression "kingdom of God" is used to describe Christ's work in the whole world

6) The phrase "kingdom of God" can refer to the privileges and honors connected with the kingdom. Israel (the covenant people which, as God's elect nation, had received the law and the means of grace) rejected the Messiah and the gospel. Therefore, they were denied all the privileges of the visible church. **Matthew 21:43:** Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

7) The expression “kingdom of God” is sometimes spoken of as a message, as something that can be preached. Luke 4:43: I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent. Christ sent the apostles “to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Lk. 9:2; cf. 9:11, 60).

So this understanding would be that the kingdom of heaven belongs to all children in the sense that those Christian parents who bring their children to church and ensure their children are active in the life of the church (Sunday Church, Sunday School, Wednesday Night Bible Study, Youth Group, other church events, etc.) - the kingdom belongs to these children because they are hearing the message of the Kingdom (the Gospel & the Word of God rightly taught), & they are partaking of many of the privileges & honors connected with the kingdom: Word; Prayer; Preaching; Singing; Seeing baptism & the Lord’s Supper; and the fellowship and love of the saints.

d. We should raise our children in the LORD: Ephesians 6:1-4: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (They are Christians in training.) (Baptism? For more mature)

e. The kingdom of heaven belongs only to those like these children: Matt. 18:1-4: At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² & calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ & said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn & become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

To receive the kingdom of God like a little child is to humble yourself & realize you are utterly helpless & unable to save yourself! You can't give God anything! You don't bring anything to the table except your sin! You can only come & received from Him! **Hymn:** Nothing in my hands I bring! Simply to Thy cross I cling!

Ephesians 2:8-9: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

John MacArthur: So our Lord says, “These babies go into the Kingdom purely by sovereign grace. They have nothing to commend themselves.” And this is the greatest illustration of how everybody goes into the Kingdom who goes into the Kingdom. It’s by sovereign grace, not because of your achievement. You have achieved no more than a baby could achieve. It’s a gift of grace.

And this grace enables you to come to Christ, even in the midst of voice after voice that says: “Get away! You cannot come! You're not good enough! You're not acceptable! The King is too busy for you! You're too unimportant! You're too lowly! You're the least of these! You're the helpless one!”

& you answer: “Yes I am! I'm unable to come! I'm not good enough! I'm not acceptable! I'm unimportant! I'm lowly! I'm the least of these! I'm helpless! But King Jesus is able! King Jesus is good enough! King Jesus is acceptable, & He accepts me & you! King Jesus is most important! King Jesus was lowly, but now He is risen & reigning! King Jesus is not too busy for me & you! He loves me & you! He will help me & you! He will save me & you!

Coming to Jesus this way means you will humble yourself & receive the King & His Kingdom as a gift that you cannot earn. It means you receive the Kingdom in helpless, humble dependence on Jesus Christ alone by faith alone!

Look at two examples of humble sinners receiving the kingdom: Matthew 8:8, 10: The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.” . . . When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

Matthew 15:26-28: He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."

And you can receive the Kingdom of God like this only because the King of the Kingdom came down from the highest of highs and made Himself the lowest of lows. He perfectly depended on His heavenly Father throughout His life. He became the littlest child. And He became the outcast of outcasts on that cross! He became the most unimportant of the unimportant! He became the least of the least! He became the helpless of the helpless! The King of kings and Lord of lords laid His privileges aside and became utterly helpless on that cross to earn for us a place in His Kingdom that we could not earn for ourselves! But then He rose up from the dead to be the highest of highs! He became the biggest, greatest, strongest child! He became the most important of the most important! He became the greatest of the greatest! He became the most helpful of the most helpful! He became of the most powerful of the most powerful! And He is 100%, totally in love with you! And for you! And for your good forever!

Ligon Duncan: Do we have gospel humility? Do we feel entitled to the grace of God? Do we feel entitled to the blessings of God so that when things go wrong with our lives we shake our fists at God as if He has done us a personal wrong? How dare He make our lives difficult! Or, do we have gospel humility? Recognizing that every good gift comes from the heavenly Father by His mercy and every difficulty is not as difficult as it ought to be because His grace is intervening. Have we had gospel humility in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby we have recognized that we deserve to be damned? We deserve to be cast off and condemned. We are sinners! And so we simply come to the Lord Jesus Christ with our empty hands and say, "Lord save me, not only from my sins but from myself, not only from my evil deeds but from my good deeds, save me Lord because I have no claims on You."

Parents should diligently bring their children to Jesus, & Jesus comes for the humble, weak, needy, and dependent – He comes for children and all who humble themselves like these little children.

**Christ Jesus Is The Littlest Child
With Greatest Righteousness Compiled
Yet For Our Sins He Died Reviled
Then Rose Again Our God Has Smiled
So Now We Come Just Like A Child!**

That's my King! Do you know Him?!

Keep the children far away
That's what His own disciples say
They're unimportant – only play
And so needy day to day
They waste our time – our life delay
What they take they can't repay
And all our bank accounts decay
But Jesus showed another way
He took them in and made them stay
His mercy says: "Come here today!
My mercy-heart you can't repay!"
He put His love on full display
When on His back our sins did weigh
The Son of Man our God did slay
To take our sins and pride away
All our hopes in Him are "Yea!"

God raised Him up on the third day
So now bow down to Him and pray
He'll make you right with God today
And cause you to His Word obey
Then on streets of gold you may
Forever dance and laugh and play!

On Christ alone we must depend
As helpless babes we can't ascend
There's nothing in us to commend
But only sin our hearts intend
The God of heaven we offend
Therefore our God so loved He'd send
His only Son His life to spend
To lowest lows He would descend
And on that cross His life expend
Then rise alive all death to end
And make poor sinner babes His friend
To helpless faith He will extend
Strong arms of mercy to defend
All condemnation He will end
And grant a love none comprehend
He's greatest joy – o'er all transcend!

Jesus became the helpless Son
Though He could crush His captors' fun
He died and all the work is done
He rose the universe to stun
Now He's the best – second to none
So trust in Him – the Rising Sun!

Christ Is The Hope Of Every Child
Without His Word They'll Live Like Wild
Apart From Him They'll Die Defiled
So Bring Them To The Christ They Riled
He Died A Curse, Cast Out, Exiled
Then Rose Alive All Praise Compiled
By Faith Alone We're Reconciled
Like A Child, Dependent, Mild
All Must Come To The Lamb Reviled
For Then On Us Our God Has Smiled
Please Come To Christ Just Like A Child!