

## Mark 10:13-16 Children of All Ages Welcome

### Read Mark 10:13

In Mark 9:36-37 we read that Jesus took a small child in His arms and told His disciples that whoever welcomes a child in His name, welcomes Him. In the Roman-Greco world children were generally viewed as having little to no worth actually a nuisance to be put up with but of no real value until he grew up.

Overall Jewish attitudes were better than those of the surrounding nations. In Israel children were seen as a blessing from God and to be childless was viewed as having been cursed by God. On a couple of occasions, in the Old Testament, childless wives went before God begging for a child. Jewish parents generally wanted God to bless them, so it was a common experience for parents to take their child to a rabbi and ask him to offer a blessing for the child. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 34:11, **“Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”** It was the expectation of parents that they would teach their children the things of the Lord because children were a gift from God.

It was that practice that prompted the event recorded in Mark 10:13-16., Mark wrote that parents were bringing their children to Jesus, asking Him to bless them. Matthew, Mark and Luke record this event giving us some idea of how important it was to the disciples and Gospel writers. Luke, in his account of this incident, used a word to denote that at least some of those being brought were infants.

For some reason, that Mark did not write anything about, the disciples decided that this should not be happening. Perhaps the disciples had come to the conclusion that this was not a good use of Jesus' time and energy. Perhaps they thought that a better use of His time would be healing a crippled person or restoring sight to a blind person than laying hands on a little kid? Perhaps they concluded that Jesus had over extended Himself and needed to take a break to eat and sleep. We can be sure the line of parents wanting Jesus to bless their children was long. We don't know what was going through their minds but it seems that they envisioned one of their responsibilities as disciples to be that of determining who could use Jesus name, who could see to Him. For whatever reason, Mark wrote that, **“the disciples rebuked them.”** The word **“rebuke”** is written in an intensive form denoting a strong reprimand. Mark used the same word twice to describe the rebuke of demons by Jesus and by Jesus to rebuke the storm when the disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee.

Mark wrote that with that, **“When Jesus saw this, he was indignant.”** The word **“indignant”** occurs only here in the New Testament and was made up two Greek words meaning *“to grieve much.”* To put it mildly, Jesus was upset, even outraged, and said to them, according to Mark 10:14, **“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”** There is no doubt about it, Jesus was upset with them for sending children away from Him. We can only imagine the tone of voice with which Jesus spoke to them.

The tense of the verb was understood by the disciples to say “*not only allow them to come to me now but never hinder them.*” There was no exception permitted. This was not instructions to allow certain parents, like faithful Jews, to bring them to Him. All children could be brought to Him. Jesus is available to all who come to Him.

There are many lessons that we can learn from this encounter but none more obvious than the fact that Jesus loves children. If you read the Gospels you know that truth was expressed in many ways in addition to what we have before us today. Think about how many times Jesus healed children or used them as examples of the ones we are to care for. Remember that in caring for a child we do it unto Jesus Himself.

Jesus was not only **declaring** His love of children, but He was saying that they were worth His time and ours. The story is told that one day someone asked the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody what response he had received to his message. Moody replied that 2 and a half individuals had made a commitment to Jesus. The individual responded, Oh, 2 adults and one child. Moody replied, “No, two children and one adult. The children have full lives to live while the adult’s life is half over.” Ministering to children, especially those in our family, is a vital ministry.

We can legitimately sing, “Jesus loves the little children of the world” because He truly does. If Jesus loves them then we must show them His love so that in time they will love Him in return.

Jesus went on to add, (v.15) “**Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**” If these children were described as being at the heart of God’s kingdom then, certainly, we need to put them at the heart of our ministry.

Not only does the incident declare loudly and clearly that Jesus loves children, but it also declares the attitude all of us need when we approach Him for salvation and therefore entrance into His kingdom. Jesus was using a child to illustrate the attitude everyone should have to become one of His followers. One becomes one of His followers with simple childlike faith. In fact, Jesus was emphatic about this. He said that anyone **who will not** receive the kingdom like a child **will never enter it.** One cannot get any more definite than that. Entrance into the Kingdom of God is not by baptism or family faith but by personally receiving it in childlike faith.

This passage sets the stage for the next story (Mark 10:17-27) where a rich man assumes that salvation is something to be earned. Here Jesus was declaring that entrance into His kingdom is for those with childlike faith, not works, come to Him.

We could spend significant time thinking about the way children would come to Jesus but briefly remember that when a child comes to Him that child has nothing to offer. He comes simply on the basis of trust in Him. Adults call that trust faith. Redemption is always by grace alone and never based on what we do. The hymn (Rock of Ages) has expressed it best when it says, “nothing in my hand I bring, simply to your Cross I cling.”

In addition to having nothing to bring, children come to Jesus, or anyone they love, in simplicity, trusting what they really do not understand. Children are open to the love of the one to whom they come. As children who are totally dependent on their parents for every daily need, we are dependent on our Heavenly Father for all of our needs and so we pray, “*give us this day our daily bread.*”

Note the word “**receive.**” The kingdom must be received. The offer of salvation is available to all but effective only for those who personally receive it. God will never force Himself on anyone, so the choice is ours. Read what Paul wrote in Romans 6:23. Salvation is a gift but we must receive it. Read John 1:12 to see all we have when we do receive Jesus as our Savior.

It doesn’t matter if we are 6 or 60 plus, the only way to become a child of God and be assured of heaven is to receive Jesus as a personal Savior. We ask with childlike faith and it is ours. That is the promise of God.

Then note how this incident finishes. Mark wrote in verse 16, “**And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.**” Jesus still does that for all His children, not just the little ones. John 1:12 calls all of us “*His children*” and invites all of us to climb up into His lap and be blessed by Him.

When was the last time you climbed into His lap and just let Him bless you? We sing, “Jesus loves the little children” and “Jesus loves me this I know.” If you have received Jesus as your Savior, you are one of His children and He wants to hold you close and bless you just as He did for the children in Israel many years ago.