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Only A Child At Heart May Enter

LUKE 18:15-17

Introduction

1. It is good to see each of you here in worship this morning.
2. Why are you and I here?
3. I believe, for the majority of us, we are here because we are a part of God's family and we long to be welcomed by Him on the last day into that eternal home He has prepared for those who love Him.
4. I believe that, like the apostle Paul, we keep working to forget what lies behind us and reaching forward to what lies ahead (Philippians 3:13).
5. I believe that every day we each are pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).
6. Here in our text this morning, in what we studied last week concerning the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) and in what we will look at next week involving the Rich Young Ruler who comes to Jesus (Luke 18:18-27), Jesus points to that which is necessary for us to enter God's Kingdom.
7. This morning, I ask you to set aside in your mind everything else that is making demands upon you and listen to what Jesus says to us about the infants who were being brought to Him, and how, if we long to enter God's kingdom, we must become like them.

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I. Jesus' Love For Children

A. MANY OF JESUS' MIRACLES INVOLVED CHILDREN

1. The royal official's son in Capernaum (John 4:46-54).
2. The demon possessed son of the man at the Mount of Transfiguration, his

only child (Luke 9:37-42; Mark 9:14-29).

3. The twelve year old daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41-42, 49-56).
4. These examples only serve to reinforce the song we so often sing — "*Jesus Loves The Little Children*".

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B. OUR CHILDREN ARE GOD'S GIFT TO US

1. If anyone should have known, it would have been Solomon.
2. Consider his words in Psalm 127:

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord,

The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,

So are the children of one's youth.

How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.”

(Psalm 127:3–5a, NASB95)

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C. THE PEOPLE WERE BRINGING THEIR BABIES TO JESUS

“And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them . . .” (Luke 18:15a, NASB95).

1. On this occasion, the people were bringing their babies to Jesus so that He might touch them
 - a. These were infants, babes in arms.
 - b. It is the same word which Luke used to describe Jesus as a newborn infant lying in the manger in Bethlehem (Luke 2:12, 16).
2. Matthew, in his account, tells us the people were doing this so that Jesus “might lay His hands on them and pray” (Matthew 19:13a).
3. Blessing the children was something which had a long history in Israel's history:

- a. Noah blessed Shem and Japheth (Genesis 9:26-27).
 - b. Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27; 28:1-4).
 - c. Jacob blessed his sons and grandsons (Genesis 48-49).
4. In our mind's eye, we can see the scene:
- a. Several proud families waiting with babies in their arms while older siblings ran around.
 - b. As they approached Jesus, He would take the infant into his arms, gently place his hand on their small heads, lift up his eyes to heaven and pronounce a blessing on each one.
 - c. Knowing what lay ahead for Him in Jerusalem, moments such as these must have brought joy to His heart.

Slide 5**D. THE DISCIPLES REBUKED THEM**

“. . . but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them” (Luke 18:15b, NASB95).

1. The Twelve did not approve of what was taking place.
2. We are not told what motivated them to respond as they did.
3. Perhaps, they saw it as an imposition upon the Lord's time.
4. They may have thought, He has other, more pressing matters to which He needs to attend.
5. As a result, “they rebuked them” (cf. Luke 4:35, 39, 41).
 - a. The word which Luke uses indicates a censoring that was “stern and uncompromising.”
 - b. He used the same word to describe Jesus' earlier casting out of the demon from the man in the synagogue in Capernaum, “Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!”” (Luke 4:35).
6. Whatever words they used, the disciples were harsh in their treatment of those who had come to have Jesus touch their children and pray for them.

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II. How Do We Enter The Kingdom of God

A. JESUS' RESPONSE TO HIS DISCIPLES

“But Jesus called for them, saying, “Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Luke 18:16, NASB95)

1. Mark, in his account of this incident, tells us that Jesus was “indignant” with the twelve.
 - a. He was angry, displeased with them and rightly so.
 - b. What they were doing to these families was mean and unjust — they did not deserve to be treated in this way.
2. The way Luke presents it is that Jesus used this as a teaching opportunity.
3. He spoke about the kind of people who enter the kingdom of God.
4. As we learned last week in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (vv. 9-14), the tax collector was declared righteous by God, not because of any merit on his part, but because of God’s mercy.
5. In the story of the Rich Young Ruler (vv. 18-30) which follows this, we will learn that this young man will get into the kingdom only after giving his wealth to the poor.
6. From these two incidents we learn a very important truth.
7. It is that those who get into the kingdom are people who are humble and who do not trust in their wealth.
8. Here, between these two, Jesus holds up children as the ideal entrants into God’s kingdom.
9. What is it about these children that is so important.
10. Whatever it is, it should stand as a model for all of us here today who long to be in God’s kingdom.

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[It is that we enter the kingdom of God by . . .]

B. BEING LIKE A CHILD

“Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.” (Luke 18:17, NASB95)

1. Jesus had just finished saying, “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (v. 16b).
2. Remember, Jesus is holding “babies”, infants in his arms.
3. When he says “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these,” He isn’t pointing to their virtues, but their deficits.
4. Children are helpless, totally dependent upon others.
 - a. All of us who have raised children know this to be true.
 - b. None of them could have survived in their early years without your constant care.
5. The infants which Jesus held in his arms that day had no list of virtues or achievements which they could present to Him.
6. Unless you and I recognize our own helplessness, our own dependency upon God’s grace, we too have no hope of an eternal home Him at the end of our earthly journey.
7. In Ephesians 2:1, the apostle Paul indicates there was a time in each of our lives that we were “dead in [our] trespasses and sins.”
8. A dead person is unable to do anything for anyone, much less for him or herself.
9. That is why God acted on our behalf (Ephesians 2:4-6).

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” (Ephesians 2:4–6, NASB95)

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10. It is as we so often sing . . .

Nothing in my hands I bring:

Simply to Thy cross I cling;
 Naked, come to Thee for dress;
 Helpless, look to Thee for grace;

11. If you or I seek to enter our Father's kingdom, this is the only way we may do so.

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B. RECEIVING AS A CHILD

1. How do children receive?
 2. With complete trust.
 - a. Children trust their parents to give them gifts which are good for them.
 - b. They have no fear that you will give them something harmful to them (cf. Luke 11:11-12).
 - c. They have such trust in us for their safety that they will allow us to toss them in the air or jump to us from an elevated place, knowing that we will catch them.
 - d. If we are to enter the kingdom of God, we must have this same trust in the One who sent His Son to save us.

9a

3. With true humility.
 - a. Unlike the Pharisee in Jesus' earlier parable, a small child doesn't boast of virtues.
 - b. When they are small, you will find in them no pride or intellectual conceit.
 - c. They are teachable and eager to learn.
 - 1) What is that? How does it work?
 - 2) Why is the sky blue? Why does the moon shine at night?
 - 3) Who is God? Where did He come from?
 - d. Oftentimes, they will readily stop and help another child.

9b

4. With unmatched expectation.
 - a. Ever watched a three year old open a birthday present?

- b. They can't get the paper off fast enough!
- c. This is the way we should receive God's kingdom.

9c

- 5. With a grateful heart.
 - a. Many children respond to a heartfelt gift with enthusiastic hugs.
 - b. Only as we age do we begin to evaluate the gifts we receive and the motive behind them.
 - c. They return the love they have been shown.
 - d. We are to respond to God's love in the same way (1 John 4:19).

"We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Conclusion

- 1. Long ago, in his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote, "When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11).
- 2. I think all of you who are adults will agree that there were certain things from your childhood which you needed to put away in order to function in "the adult world."
- 3. However, Jesus tells us that there are certain things about our childhood which are necessary if we hope to enter His Father's kingdom.
 - a. The realization that we are helpless and totally dependent upon Him for our salvation.
 - b. The need to receive His free gift of salvation with complete trust, sincere humility, unmatched eagerness to experience what is to come, and a heart which overflows with gratitude for what He has done and continues to do in our lives.
- 4. Are you still a child at heart? Are there some things you need to get back?
- 5. God can make it possible. Will you come to His Son today?