

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 16, 2017

Receiving The Kingdom
Mark 10:13-16

Introduction

- People love to earn or achieve things
- School achievements
 - Student of the month, honor roll, principal's list, dean's list, valedictorian
- Sports awards
 - Championships, MVP, All-Conference/League/American/Stars Teams, Participation and Sportsmanship
- Work achievements
 - Employee of the month, promotions
- Naturally this way of thinking in mankind has been transferred to salvation or eternal life
 - Islam - Teaches that all people are sinners (Quran 16,61) and that salvation can be attained through observing the Five Pillars of Islamic practice:
 - 1) the belief that Allah is the only god and that Muhammad is his messenger;
 - 2) performing the five daily prayers;
 - 3) fasting throughout the month of Ramadan;
 - 4) charity, giving to the poor;
 - 5) the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, if one can afford it.
 - By performing these works, a Muslim hopes that at the judgment day the recorded good deeds will exceed the bad ones, and so he or she will reach the paradise of material and sensual delights (56,16-41).
 - Buddhism - Requires practicing 4 noble truths in order to be released from suffering
 - 1) The nature of existence is suffering.
 - 2) Suffering is caused by desire, or thirst (tanha) to experience existence.
 - 3) The complete cessation of desire leads to the cessation of suffering.

we must respond. Scripture shows, in many places, the nature of this cooperation with grace.”⁴

- Catholicism says, Faith + Works = Justification
- We say, Faith = Justification + Works
- Christianity - Requires mankind to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved
 - Confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved
 - For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast
- The teaching of Jesus contributes to this established truth and doctrine that eternal life comes as a gift

I. The prevention (10:13)

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them.

- Transition back to involving the public
 - Verses 1-9 covered a debate in public regarding divorce
 - Verses 10-12 followed the debate with further private teaching to the disciples
 - Now we have families from the public attempting to reach Jesus again
- “And they were bringing children to him”
 - “They” (vague) must be the assumed parents of the children
 - Greek word for children is *παιδιά*, which is non-specific vague
 - The word is used for the 12 year old girl that Jesus raised from the dead (5:39)
 - However, Luke 18:15 says “babies” instead of “children”
 - Also, Jesus takes “them in his arms” in v. 16
 - More than likely Jesus was dealing with infants and small children
- They were bringing children in order that Jesus “might touch” them
 - Normally Jesus touching people in the gospels entails healing
 - As this account informs us, this was not for healing but blessing (v. 16)
 - This was typical for Jewish parents to bring their children to the rabbi to be blessed through the laying on of hands and prayer
 - Matthew 19:13 “Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray...”

⁴ <http://catholicism.org/faith-and-good-works.html>

- The disciples were defensive and “rebuked them” for trying to bring children to Jesus
 - This is a strong response from the disciples “rebuke” (*epitimaō*)
 - They didn’t kindly dismiss the parents or try to take a message
 - They viewed themselves as guardians of Jesus’ time and ministry
 - They were preventing these little ones who were being brought by their parents
 - This verifies the low view and status of children during the time of Christ
 - Disciples seemed to have forgotten Mark 9:36-37 already
- Jesus used this prevention as a teachable opportunity

II. The permission (10:14)

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

- “But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant...”
 - Other mention of Jesus’ anger was when the religious leaders were trying to set Him up on the Sabbath (3:5)
 - Probably angered by the fact that the disciples still did not understand level of service necessary (Mark 9:35-37)
- “... and said to them, ‘Let the children come to me; do not hinder them,’”
 - Jesus essentially rebukes the disciples
 - First, He gives the positive command, “Let the children come to me”
 - This is a call to permit or allow the children to come
 - Second, He gives the prohibition, “do not hinder them”
- Then, Jesus’ shocking statement, “for to such belongs the kingdom of God”
- What exactly is Jesus saying?
- What is He not saying?
 - He is not declaring the immediate salvation of these literal children that are in front of Him
 - He does not emphasize anything special or particular about them or their families
 - Instead, Jesus seems to be speaking in a more universal and generic fashion
 - He is not merely speaking on the level of the illustration with no implication for the fate or destiny of children
 - If His only desire was to speak illustratively, then why the strong language? Why the rebuke toward His disciples?

- If only illustration, then why did Jesus gather the children and infants up to pray for them and bless them? All because He was a nice guy?
 - If only illustration, He would have jumped straight to His statement in verse 15, which is the illustration
 - Therefore, Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God actually belongs to children and infants
 - The Kingdom of God is actually made up of such as these, children and infants
 - Children were viewed as small, insignificant, and needy and those without social status
 - They can give nothing to people and they can give nothing to God
 - Yet God says that the Kingdom belongs to the class of children!
- This is a comforting statement from Jesus
- This verse helps us to think correctly about the eternal destiny of the countless souls that have been aborted, miscarried, stillborn, or taken at a young age
- Where are they? Can we give any answer to such common tragedies?
- According to Jesus, they are in heaven!
- The Kingdom of God belongs to such as those
- Jesus' words and the rest of Scripture help us to give such a positive answer regarding the eternal destiny of children and infants
 - First, it is interesting to note that Paul's teaching about all mankind being condemned is based upon the observed reality of God's creation (Romans 1:18-20)
 - Babies and children have not observed God's creation to be judged accordingly
 - Second, David's response to the death of his baby indicates his confidence of seeing his baby again in heaven
 - 2 Samuel 12:23 "But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."
 - It is interesting to add that the death of David's rebellious son, Absalom, caused David to grieve and mourn after his death
 - Perhaps David knew he would see his baby son in heaven while David had no such confidence for Absalom
 - Third, God's heart for children is evident in the Old Testament
 - Jonah 4:11 "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left..."

- People who do not know their right hand from their left are children
 - Fourth, God calls the death of children in pagan sacrifice and worship “my children” (Ezekiel 16:20-21)
 - Fifth, in the future there will be people worshiping God from every tribe, tongue and nation in heaven (Revelation 5:9)
 - This fits well with the death of babies and children around the globe who are in heaven to represent all the nations
 - Based on these references throughout Scripture, it seems clear that God has given the Kingdom to babies, children, and those who do not have the mental capacity to process God’s creation and right from wrong (Romans 2:14)
- Jesus’ statement challenges the thinking of 1st Century Judaism
- They were a people accustomed to working for and achieving things
- Instead, Jesus says that the Kingdom of God belongs to such as babies and children
- After stating this truth, Jesus expands His teaching on salvation and the Kingdom

III. The principle (10:15)

15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

- “Truly, I say to you” indicates that an important concept or principle is coming
 - Jesus will now explain why the kingdom of God belongs to childlike individuals
 - The salvation of children is not simply a truth based upon the character of God
 - The salvation of children is also an illustration for the nature of salvation
- The principle is a negative principle
 - If one does not receive the Kingdom of God as a child, then they will not enter into it
 - This is the strongest possible negation in the Greek language
 - ESV translation “shall not enter it”
 - NASB translation “will not enter it at all”
 - Some propose “He/she will never enter it”
 - Maybe best to say, “There is no way in the world that he/she will ever enter it”
- This is a strong principle and it’s surrounding the concept of salvation so we must understand it!
- How does one receive the Kingdom of God “like a child”?

- Some people say you must be innocent like a child to enter the Kingdom
- Others advocate the concept of childlike faith
 - Unfortunately, while it sounds good, the thought is not explicitly stated by Jesus
 - Additionally, do babies and small children really portray active faith?
 - Childlike behavior involves not just trust and honesty but selfishness and depravity
- Not all children even have Christian, holy, or righteous parents
 - Nothing is said about parents in this passage
- This is referring to how children receive things – without any effort or work
 - One does not feed a baby based upon whether they were obedient and did not cry as much that day – Absurd!
 - We all know that children are helpless on their own
- The Kingdom of God must be received like a child in the way that a child receives everything – Like a gift
- So too, anyone wishing to enter into the Kingdom of God must receive it (not work for it) like a gift
 - John 1:12-13 “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
 - Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
 - Titus 3:4-7 “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”
- What a confrontation this is to the 1st Century Jews!
 - They have been brainwashed into thinking that their good deeds would give them right standing with God
 - The reality was that no one could be or will ever be right with God through the Law
 - Instead, the Law condemns and shows mankind’s need for a Savior

- After addressing the nature of salvation, Jesus returns to address the children

IV. The prayer (10:16)

16 And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

- “And he took them in his arms...”
 - Jesus then proceeded to hug the children
- “... and blessed them, laying his hands on them.”
 - This was not a magical formula of any sort
 - This was in keeping with the Jewish practice of rabbinical blessing for children
 - Laying on of hands is a sign of association
 - Laying on of hands can also be a traditional symbol of blessing
- Jesus prayed for these babies and children just as He prayed for His own disciples and followers at the end of His earthly ministry (John 17)
- Since salvation is in God’s hands and He gives it out as a gift, we request His mercy and grace to be extended to sinners like us