



COMMUNITY
BIBLE CHURCH
A COMMUNITY OF FAITH

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Jesus Sees and Loves Children

Mark 10:13-16; Matt. 18:1-6

INTRO

What a great morning we've had already, haven't we? We kicked off our Sunday School program. We heard from Compassion Canada. There has been a focus on children this morning. And what does Jesus think about this? What does Jesus think of children?

My message for today is simple—that Jesus sees children and he loves them. If you are a child here today, Jesus sees you, and he loves you. And I want to tell you about some of the ways he sees you and loves you.

Jesus sees and loves children. He welcomed them, even when His disciples initially tried to keep them away. He saw them as important and desired to bless and protect them. He sees children as good examples of faith and humility and says that if we want to enter God's Kingdom, we should emulate the trust and humility exhibited by children. Jesus encourages His followers to adopt these childlike qualities.

Jesus sees and loves children. This extends to all children, regardless of their circumstances, including those yet to be born and children from various family backgrounds.

Jesus sees and loves children. On this Sunday, as we kick off our Sunday School program, we'll look at a number of passages of Scripture that show that Jesus sees and loves children.

1. Jesus Sees Children As Good Examples of Faith (Mark 10:13–16)

Mark 10:13-16

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

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

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

This scene is recorded in all three of the synoptic gospels. In all three, children are being brought to Jesus so that he can lay hands on them and pray for them. What is the significance of this detail? Well, there is nothing magical in this. It is simply a prayer for them, that God would see them and be gracious to them and give them peace.

People recognize Jesus as someone who will value children and care for them. But in all three gospels, it is recorded that as people tried to bring their children to Jesus, the disciples - these disciples of Jesus - acted like they were the bodyguards of someone who was a big celebrity. "Oh, no, no, no - you cannot get that close to Mr. Jesus. He is far too busy and far too important to be bothered with unimportant

people! He is very important and has important things to do. He can't be bothered with unimportant things and unimportant people!"

Have you ever had an experience where someone behaves in a way that just takes you off guard? Their behaviour strikes Jesus as somewhat odd. You see, Jesus... loves... children. And so when people who perceive Jesus to be kind and loving bring their children to him, he finds nothing odd in this. He sees it as a wonderful opportunity to bless these children.

But not these disciples! When people bring their children to Jesus, the disciples rebuke them! And the sense of the word used for rebuke here is to charge or accuse someone of doing wrong. The disciples are in effect saying, "Are you out of your mind?! What are you thinking, trying to bring your children to Jesus?!"

But when Jesus sees this, it says in Mark 10:14 that he is indignant! He is grieved. He is angry, incensed. Not just mildly annoyed, but angry. And he says to them in Mark 10:14-15:

"Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

The source of his anger is his great love for people, and here especially for children. That little ones so precious would be kept from him does not sit well with him. "Don't be foolish, you disciples! When children want to come to me, let them come! Don't hinder them. Don't get in their way. Don't restrain them. Don't prevent them from getting to me. Let them through. Let them come!"

Why? Jesus says, "*for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*" He goes on to say, in Mark 10:15: "*Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*" William

Hendrickson says this means to “accept it with genuine trustful simplicity, with unassuming humility.”¹

Mark records this beautiful detail in v. 16: “*And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.*” Two things impress me here:

1. He was willing to pick them up and
2. They were willing to be picked up by him.

I don't know about your experience with other people's small children, but I find it can be a bit of a coin toss, right? With Audrey, for example, the young child I know best. Sometimes she reaches out to me, and my heart melts. “Yes, I'm the favourite non-parent adult!” And then other times she recoils and clings tight to Sueann's leg. And I'm like, “What did I do wrong?! Why does she no longer love me?!?” So I take my chances, but I'm never sure what's going to go down.

But Jesus is just like: “Come to me, all you children!” And all the children seem to be like: “He seems like an amazing and really nice and safe adult! Let's go!”

That's pretty cool. That the Saviour of the world, God in the flesh, the one who bore our guilt and shame on the cross, was also someone whom children trusted and wanted to be around. May we all aim to be such people!

Jesus values children because they know how to trust. They trust their parents to provide for them, house them, feed them, and care for them. They don't have their own money, nor do they have the ability to provide for themselves. They are in need of protection,

¹ NTC commentary, p382

being smaller versions of larger humans who sometimes want to do them harm.

For all of this, they need trust. And it is this trust, primarily, that Jesus is drawing our attention to. His disciples don't get it. Over and over again, they fail to trust Jesus. In the boat, in the storm, they don't trust that Jesus can save them. When Peter walks briefly on water, he begins to sink when he fails to trust Jesus. As adults, we have more trouble trusting because we feel that we are self-sufficient. But the Kingdom of God is not for the self-sufficient; it is for those who know they have no choice but to trust because, in their own strength, they can do nothing.

G. Campbell Morgan says "Our Lord thus declared not only that all children are included in His Kingdom; but that, in order to be included, all older people must become children."² In saying that we must all become children, he's not saying this because children are perfect, but because they have no choice but to trust. They are dependent on those who are stronger than they are. And if anyone would like to enter God's Kingdom, they must, in these ways, become like children.

Children, Jesus sees you as good examples of faith. As you grow into an adult, never lose your simple trust in Jesus. And as you come to understand Jesus more and more, decide to follow him all the days of your life.

2. Jesus Sees Children As Good Examples of Humility (Matt. 18:1-4)

Matthew 18:1-4

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

² G. Campbell Morgan, Studies in the Four Gospels, p224

*2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them
3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and 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.*

This is another encounter that appears in all three synoptic gospels. In these three parallel passages, the disciples are discussing and arguing about which one of them is the greatest in the Kingdom of God. This is a silly and foolish conversation that reveals that they don't understand much about the Kingdom of God, even though they have been in the presence of the ruler of that kingdom for some time.

They had missed the point; they had missed many points!

They were still thinking about a kingdom that looked like the kingdoms of this world, where horses and chariots communicated dominance and power and where powerful rulers were in charge, dictating how people should live and how society should function. And they were thinking: "Hmmm, I'd like to be one of those powerful people with a horse and a chariot and some really cool armour. Then I would be in charge, and I could make people do what I want them to do. They would serve me!" Each of them wanted to be considered the greatest, and they were arguing about that fact.

Jesus (possibly rolling his eyes) sits down and calls the twelve around him. "Come here, guys. Let's clear a few things up..." Now, Jesus could have just given them a verbal lesson. He could have corrected them quickly and harshly for their bad attitudes and selfish expectations. He could have chastised them for their pride in wanting to be at the top of the power structure.

But Jesus takes a child and puts the child in the middle of them. Now we already know from the previous scene we looked at that the disciples don't seem to think very highly of children. They think that

children need to be kept away from Jesus, as if they are a nuisance, as if they are a waste of his time.

But Jesus... Jesus proves them to be very, very wrong.

You see, not only does Jesus want children to come to him, but he sees them in some ways as superior to his adult disciples. The average child has some kind of advantage over these men who want to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God. This must have puzzled them!

Matthew records in his gospel that Jesus says this: *"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

They must have been shocked! They think very little of children, yet Jesus seems to think much of these small humans. They see children as distractions to be shooed away, yet Jesus seems to make them the centre of attention. They see children as important in the future once they are adults, but Jesus sees children as important now, while they are still children!

Mark records Jesus as saying, *"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."* And Luke records Jesus as saying, *"Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."*

This is very different from what the disciples seemed to expect Jesus to say, which would have sounded more like: "I need individuals who are ruthlessly ambitious, who hunger to rule over others as the heads of the church! People who want to bask in the glory of their achievements. I'm looking for people who will do

whatever it takes to climb the ladder into positions of power. If that's you, then I invite you to join my team."³

No, Jesus will not have such people, for they are the opposite of what it means to be childlike. Jesus sees children as good examples of humility, and those are qualities that must be ours if we hope to enter the Kingdom of God.

3. Jesus Sees Children As Precious and In Need of Protection (Matt. 18:5-6)

Matthew 18:5-6

*5 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,
6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*

As I've already mentioned, children must constantly trust. They need housing, food, and daily care, and when they are young, they can provide none of these for themselves. They must rely on adults to provide for them, and being small and vulnerable means they also need protection from anyone who would do them harm.

Jesus says, "*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin*" - meaning to stumble, to hurt their conscience, whoever causes them to fail, to do things they know to be wrong but which they feel forced to do.

This is something that Jesus takes VERY seriously, as we can see from the powerful wording in these verses. Children need protection, and yet there are many people in the world who instead prey on

³ Adapted from <https://chat.openai.com/share/b04aa5c3-314d-40b5-bdf3-4785b5a88e58>

children, gaining their trust in order to do harm. This is a most despicable action and one that deserves the harshest remedies.

The abuse of children is an unseen epidemic in our society. The trafficking of children is a lot more prominent than any of us would like to admit. Many adults seek to groom children into distorted thinking that will make these children available to them for sinful purposes.

To all such people, Jesus says that it would be better for them to have 100 pounds of concrete put around their necks and be thrown into the greatest depths of the deepest ocean than to allow them to continue to abuse and misuse children. Does that sound harsh? Yes. Is it overly harsh? Not according to Jesus! Abusing and misusing children is a very serious offence according to Jesus.

G. Campbell Morgan says: "The spirit that receives a child, and will not offend it, is the spirit that will not put a stumbling block in the way of the world. **The man who offends a child is the man who wounds the world.** Let there be no softening of these words of Jesus."⁴

His point: when children are mistreated and preyed upon, the whole world is in worse shape because of it. This misuse and abuse causes damage in the present and even more damage to the future.

Children, Jesus sees you as precious and in need of protection. As the adults in your life, we will do everything we can to protect you.

4. Jesus Sees Children As Capable of Understanding Great Truths (Matt 11:25-30)

Matt 11:25-30

⁴ G. Campbell Morgan, Studies in the Four Gospels, p230

25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Jesus here again makes an example and a contrast involving children. The wise and understanding adults are those super-intellectuals who have amassed knowledge beyond what most human beings encounter and have accomplished what was thought to be unattainable. These people are no further ahead in the Kingdom of God than small children if they have not retained a childlike heart.

One commentator notes that: "He [Jesus] is very far from condemning intellectual power; what he is condemning is intellectual pride. It is not cleverness which shuts us out; it is pride. It is not stupidity which admits [us]; it is humility. A man may be as wise as Solomon, but if he has not the simplicity, the trust, the innocence of a childlike heart, he shuts himself out."⁵

Children can cling and trust and cry and love. That's a pretty good description of most small children I know. They can cling when they are afraid. They trust the one to whom they cling. They can cry when physically or emotionally wounded. And they can love with a type of affection that can only be expressed between a child and a loving parent.

⁵ Barclay

That, Jesus is saying, is how we are to respond to our Father in heaven. That is how we will understand him better than those who have spent a lifetime ONLY studying doctrines about him without ever knowing him as their Father.

We must cling to him when we are afraid, and trust him as we cling. We must cry out to him when we endure hardship, and express our love to him each day. Children understand this because to be a child is to recognize that we need someone who is bigger than we are.

Jesus sees children as capable of understanding great and simple truths; may we all be childlike enough to understand.

5. Jesus Sees Children Who Are Not Yet Born (Psalm 139:13-16)

Psalm 139:13-16

*For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

In Canadian law, under section 223 of the Criminal Code of Canada, an unborn baby is a "human being ... when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother." Not before then, says the Government of Canada! The confusion continues: "A person commits homicide when he causes injury to a child before or during its birth as a result of which the child dies after becoming a

human being." And so, according to the law of our land, a child who dies before it is born never qualifies for the status of "human being". As a result of this ungodly law, many unborn babies die in Canada every year without justice ever being served, because they are never acknowledged as human beings

But what Canadian law says about when someone becomes a human being is not - IS NOT - what God says about when someone becomes a human being.

You see, God doesn't wait until a child has "completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother." No, he knows us long before that! While he is busy forming us, we are already us! While he is knitting us together, he is already calling us by name!

He sees us even when we are unformed substance. Not simply as a clump of cells that will later become a baby

No, he sees us and knows us. He writes the days of our lives in his book before we even live them. He cares for us before we are born, and he encourages parents to raise their children with a knowledge of God and his word.

In Psalm 78:1-7, we read this:

*1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
2 I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
3 things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.
4 **We will not hide them from their children,
but tell to the coming generation**
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.
5 He established a testimony in Jacob*

*and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers
to teach to their children,
6 that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and arise and tell them to their children,
7 so that they should set their hope in God
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;*

Here the psalmist writes of the expectation that children who are not yet born will be told of "the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done." God commands the fathers of future children to teach their children "so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments..."

We do not know the names and birthdates of children who are not yet born and not yet even conceived - but God does! We believe that God knows the names and birthdates of every child yet to be born. And he is giving a command in the present that these children should know of him by way of the teaching of their parents.

Jesus loves children who are not yet born, and that means he loved you and me before we were born!

Conclusion

In conclusion then... whether you are a child today or have been a child at some point in your life: Jesus loves you. :-) So this morning, we want to welcome all children in Jesus' name. You are important. Jesus loves you.

When you come to Sunday School each week, we want to show you the love of Jesus and encourage you to follow him all the days of your life.

Questions to Ponder and Discuss

1. How does our culture, and even our own hearts, mirror the disciples' error in treating children as a nuisance and undervaluing their spiritual needs?
2. How does Christ's demand that we receive the kingdom like a child strip away human pride and reinforce that we can do nothing in our own strength?
3. How does Jesus setting a helpless child among the arguing disciples challenge our fleshly obsession with ambition, power, and self-sufficiency in the church?
4. In light of Christ's severe warnings about millstones and the sea, how can our church actively guard children against those who would cause them harm?
5. How does the doctrine of God's foreordaining providence over the unborn, as seen in Psalm 139, equip us to speak with conviction in a culture that devalues life?
6. How can we, as a wider church family, better support and pray for parents carrying the heavy burden of raising children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

The content of this booklet was written by Michael Krahn, lead pastor of Community Bible Church in Ilderton, Ontario. We are a gospel-centered church devoted to the faithful teaching of Scripture, the building up of believers, and bearing witness to Christ in our community and beyond. To learn more, join us for a Sunday service, or connect with us directly, scan the QR code or visit: cbcilderton.ca/contact-us

