

## Some Kids Meet a Man with a Kingdom

Series: Journey to the Cross

Luke 18:15-17

March 26, 2017

Well, it's so good to be in worship together today. During this season of Lent, we prepare ourselves through prayer and self-denial as we are traveling with Jesus on His "Journey to the Cross." And as we have been learning, He had unquestionably set His course, His path, towards Jerusalem. Yet, instead of being tunnel vision, only seeing the path, or as we say in the Wheeler house when working towards a goal, "We're going to work until we're all done, all done, all done." Instead of ignoring everything else, Jesus stopped when there was someone in need. As a result, a blind man met a Healer, a little man met a big God, and a rich man met a Man with a treasure.

Today, we have, I think, one of the loveliest stories of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, and it's when some kids meet a Man with a Kingdom.

It seems the pastor's small son was out in the backyard one day playing in the dirt. When it was time to come in for dinner, he ran in quickly and sat at his place at the table. His mother told him that he needed to get up and go wash his hands. The boy said he didn't want to; he was perfectly content to stay in his seat. Back and forth this went: mother telling him to wash his hands, and the boy saying he didn't want to. He finally asked, "Why," and instead of giving him the "because I told you so" answer, the mother said that he should wash his hands because there were germs living in all that dirt. He knew he had pushed far enough, so as he was getting up, he complained: "Germs and Jesus! Germs and Jesus! That's all I ever hear around this house and I've never seen either one!"

Well, we're going to see Jesus today. I want to invite you to turn to page 5 in your bulletin. We're going to look at Luke 18:15-17. Follow along as I read:

*People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."<sup>1</sup>*

As I was preparing this message, I saw what one pastor called the people in this story, "The Good, The Bad, and the Snuggly." I like that.

It was the custom for mothers to bring their children to some distinguished Rabbi on their 1<sup>st</sup> birthday that he might bless them. That is what these mothers and fathers wanted for their children from Jesus – not matter their age – a blessing.

Now, we probably shouldn't be too hard on the disciples, thinking they were hard and cruel. It may have been kindness that made them act as they did. Remember where Jesus was going. He was on the way to Jerusalem to die upon a cross. The disciples could see upon His face this inner tension of His heart; and they did not want Jesus to be bothered. Often at home, we may say to a little child, "Don't bother Daddy; he's tired and worried tonight." That is exactly how the disciples may have felt about Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 18:15-17 (NIV)

But, as we have learned during this series, even though Jesus had set his sights towards Jerusalem and the cross, He nonetheless stopped and impacted lives. He stopped a healed Blind Bart. He stopped and saved Zack. He stopped and tried to help Richie Rich, but Richie Rich could not give up control in his life. Jesus was willing to stop and reach out to people on the journey to the cross.

The disciples had also forgotten what Jesus had already told them about children. Matthew 18 reads,

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."<sup>2</sup>*

Jesus wanted little children to come to Him because He loves them and because they have a guileless trust in God.

So, in our passage today, families bring some kids to meet a Man with a Kingdom. The disciples, however, thought the children were unworthy of the Master's time – less important than whatever else He was doing. But Jesus welcomed them and taught us that it is important that we introduce our children to Jesus.

Jesus said,

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."<sup>3</sup>*

How does someone do that, "receive the Kingdom of God like a little child?" I want to suggest five child-like attitudes we must have to be a Kingdom Kid.

**First, a child has a sense of wonder.**

A child sees things and is filled with a sense of wonder of them. Do you remember going to your first circus or amusement park or first Cincinnati Reds baseball game when you were a kid. Or seeing the wonder on your child's face and the excitement in their voice the first time they went to Disney or went to a really cool playground with lots of fun stuff. We felt joy in giving them that experience.

We should have that same sense of wonder about God and who He is. Psalm 40:5 reads,

*O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them."<sup>4</sup>*

As we grow older, we begin to live in a world which has grown grey and tired. A child lives in a world with a sheen on it and in which God is always near. We need to have a sense of wonder to be a Kingdom Kid.

**Second, a child believes what seems impossible.**

MARTY AND THE UK BASKETBALL.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 18:1-6 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Luke 18:16-17 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 40:5, NLT

Marty absolutely believed that his uncle Greg could get that basketball signed by the UK coach. So we need to absolutely believe that God can do anything, and I mean anything.

Ephesians 3:20 is a Scripture we have claimed in our church. We read it as a statement of faith at the end of every administrative and ministry meeting we have. I want you to read it with me:

*Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.*<sup>5</sup>

Do you really believe that passage, that God is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think? That's what it takes to be a Kingdom Kid.

**Third, a child's whole life is founded on trust.**

**THROWING A TODDLER UP IN THE AIR**

When we are young, we never doubt where the next meal is to come from or where our clothes will be found. We go to school certain that home will be there when we return, and all things ready for our comfort. When we go on a journey, we never doubt that the entrance fee will be paid or that our parents know the way and will take us safely there. The child's trust in his or her parents is absolute, as ours should be in God.

The writer of Hebrew expresses it this way:

*So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"*<sup>6</sup>

Do you really trust God in all matters of life? Are you afraid of anything: the future, the past, the present? Do you believe firmly that the Lord is your helper and no one can do anything to you?" Or are you still holding onto control like Richie Rich was when he walked away – walked away – from Jesus. The life of a Kingdom Kid is founded on trust.

**Fourth, a child is naturally obedient.**

Now, some of you are disagreeing with me on this point. True, a child often disobeys and grumbles at his or her parents' bidding. But their instinct is to obey. They know very well that they should obey and is not happy when he or she has been disobedient. In their heart of hearts, their parents' word is law. So should it be with us and God.

1 Peter says,

*So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires.*<sup>7</sup>

Obedience is a requirement to be a Kingdom Kid.

**Finally, a child has an amazing faculty of forgiveness.**

A child has an amazing faculty of forgiveness. Almost all parents are unjust to their children. We demand from them a standard of obedience, of good manners, of refined language, of diligence which we seldom satisfy ourselves. Time and again, we scold them for doing the very things we do ourselves. If others treated us in the way we

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<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 3:20, NLT

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 13:6, NRSV

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 1:14, NLT

treat our children in the matter of plain justice, we probably would never forgive. But the child forgives and forgets, and does not even realize it when he or she is very young.

Paul points out in Colossians 3:13:

*Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*<sup>8</sup>

That person that bullied you: forgive. That person that betrayed your trust: forgive. That person that hurt you or continues to hurt you: forgive.

It would be so much lovelier a world if we would forgive as a child forgives, and to be a Kingdom Kid, you need to forgive.

So how can you “receive the Kingdom of God like a child”? Jesus does not ask us to put aside our experiences, but He does require a change of attitude: adult self-sufficiency must recognize its need for the sovereign God; adult moral defensiveness must humble itself before the holy God; and adult skeptical toughness must soften before the loving God. Children do not feel supremely powerful, perfectly righteous, or totally autonomous. These are adult fantasies. Coming to Jesus means to accept His goodness on your behalf, confess your need, and commit your life to His tender guidance.<sup>9</sup>

My dear friends, to keep alive the sense of wonder, to believe what seems impossible, to live in unquestioning trust, to instinctively obey, to forgive and to forget – that is the childlike spirit, and that is the passport of a Kingdom Kid into the kingdom of God.

Every single one of us was born into a world of sin and alienation. We were born to sinful parents, who passed the guilt of sin to us. Our own sinful nature seeks alienation from God. We live in a family not of God. We are not God's children.

But when we give our lives over to Christ, then, and only then, does God do a miracle. We are brought into the family of God as adopted children.

I ask you to watch this video that teaches this idea of adoption.

THIRD DAY “CHILDREN OF GOD.”

We have been redeemed and we can be called: children of God. Write that down. We have been redeemed and we can be called: children of God.

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<sup>8</sup> Colossians 3:13, NLT

<sup>9</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Mark 10:15