

FBC Sunday August 10, 2025, Let the Children Come Matth. 18:1-6; 19:13-15 Mark 10:14

Intro Slide: Today, we gather around one of the most tender and profound teachings of Jesus. In Matthew 18, the disciples ask a question that echoes through every generation: *“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”*

And in response, Jesus does something unexpected. He calls a child to Himself. Not a scholar, not a leader, not a warrior—but a child.

This moment is not just about physical children—it reveals God's heart, the nature of true faith, and a rebuke to the pride and self-sufficiency that often characterizes adulthood. It also has strong implications for how we treat children in our homes, churches, and communities.

This simple act carries a radical message. It challenges our assumptions about greatness, power, and spiritual maturity. It invites us to see children not as distractions or lesser members of the faith community, but as a picture of humility, trust, and innocence.

In a world that often overlooks the small and the vulnerable, Jesus says, **“Let the children come.”** Not just physically, but spiritually—let their posture become ours. Let their openness become our model. Let their presence remind us of what it means to truly belong to the kingdom of heaven.

So today, we’re not just talking about children—we’re learning from them. And perhaps, in doing so, we’ll rediscover the childlike faith that opens the gates of heaven.

Slide: 1 The Basic Principle Matthew 19:13-15.

Let’s begin with a statement of the basic principle from an incident recorded in Matthew 19:13-15.

One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

14 But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.” 15 And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.

Slide 2: The “Magna Carter” of Children

This passage has been called “the Magna Carta of Children.” These are some of the simplest words Jesus ever spoke. Only the very hardest hearts would not be moved by them.

What moves me most in this passage is the spontaneous desire of parents to bring their children to Jesus. Yet incredibly, his disciples were reluctant to let the children come near.

How strange, how sad, and yet how often this happens, that anyone would be so task-oriented they don’t want the children to bother the Lord.

The disciples were like the prime ministers’ bodyguards, keeping well-wishers at a distance.

To the disciples, the children were just a bother, one more interruption in an already-busy day.

Slide 3: Jesus' Indignation At Those Who Would Keep Children Away from Him.

In Mark's version of this incident (Mark 10:13-16), Jesus was upset by what his disciples did. Many translations say he became angry.

The ERV says it this way: *"He did not like his followers telling the children not to come."* The Message says, *"But Jesus was irate and let them know it."*

Look at what Jesus said in Mark 10:15 (HCSB), *"I assure you: Whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

Only those who are like children can come at all.

That must have shocked those bickering disciples. Ironically, at that moment the little children were closer to Jesus than the disciples who tried to keep them away.

Slide 4: Jesus' Willingness to Embrace Children and Bless Them. Mark 10:16

"He took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them."

No wonder parents loved him.

If you show kindness to my children, it means more than if you had shown kindness to me. Little children are smarter than we think. They know when they are loved, and they respond with love to those who love them. **No wonder children flocked to him.**

Think of it . . . the parents wanted their children to come to Jesus . . . the boys and girls were not afraid of him . . . and he picked them up in his arms . . . then put his hands on them and blessed them.

Should we do any less? Is there any work greater than caring for children? Should we not also bring our children to him? And if we do, will he turn them away? **No, he will not.** He will embrace our children just as he embraced these children so long ago.

Slide 5: Jesus Will Not Turn Our Children Away.

It's Christ-like to love children, to care for them, to welcome them, and to embrace them. It's like Jesus to become indignant at those who would mistreat them.

Jesus is the little child's best friend. Christianity has always been the religion that safeguarded the rights of children.

Wherever the gospel goes . . . it honours families . . . it elevates motherhood . . . it protects and preserves the place of children.

Where Christ is known and trusted and followed, and where his example is the model, their infancy is sacred and children are safe.

Slide 6: A Question of Rank Matthew 18:1

Lest we miss the seriousness of all this, Matthew 18 includes another story that starts as a question the disciples asked.

“Lord, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (v. 1)

Strange that Jesus’ handpicked men would ask a question like that. You would think that having followed the Master for so many months, any thought of self-importance would have vanished.

But here they are, arguing about who would be the greatest.

In response, Jesus took a child and had him stand in their midst (v. 2). As the disciples looked at the young boy, they wondered what Jesus meant to say. The answer was simple and clear:

“Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (v. 3).

Then the direct answer to their question:

“Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (v. 4).

Slide 7: The Heart of The Message Matthew 18:5

Then comes the heart of the message for us today. In the next few verses Jesus tells us why children matter so much to him and why they should matter to us.

Jesus is the little child’s best friend.

1. When we welcome a child in Jesus’ name, we are welcoming Jesus himself.

“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me” (v. 5). This statement has enormous implications:

Jesus doesn’t just tolerate children. He welcomes them. He honours them. He places His hands on them. He lifts them up as models of the kind of faith we should all have.

In a culture where children had little social status, Jesus dignifies them. In a world where children are often treated as interruptions, Jesus sees them as invitations.

Why does he say that to welcome a little child is to welcome him? Because Jesus himself was once a baby!

When we reject our children, we are rejecting Christ himself.

Slide 8: A Warning the World Forgets Matthew 18:6

“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” (v 6).

When we deliberately harm a child, we face an unspeakable judgment.

In the ancient world, farmers would take freshly harvested grain and grind it between two heavy stones. The “millstone” was a huge stone so heavy that it was pulled by a donkey.

The “depth of the sea” represents the deepest, darkest, most turbulent spot.

If you hang a millstone around a man’s neck and drop him in the depth of the sea, he will most certainly drown. The millstone makes his death doubly sure.

Literally the warning is against those who cause little children to stumble. What does Jesus mean by this? It means to lead them into sin, to tempt to evil, to hurt the children, to abuse them, to neglect them, to ignore them, to expose them to danger, and ultimately to harm them physically or spiritually.

When we reject our children, we are rejecting Christ himself.

It’s anything we do that causes harm to come to our children.

Note that Jesus applies this to *“these little ones who believe in me,”* teaching us a vital truth.

Slide 9: Can Children Truly Believe in Jesus?

Sometimes we wonder, “Can a child truly believe in Jesus?”

Yes, indeed, and if we have raised our children in the truth of God, we ought to expect them to believe.

Let’s ask God to save our children.

Some people mock the faith of a child. That’s a terrible thing to do.

Some cast doubt and make jokes as if only adults can believe in Jesus.

How sad, how tragic, that anyone should make fun of God’s little children.

Here is Charles Spurgeon’s comment in *Do Not Hinder the Children*:

People occasionally say of such a one, “He’s only fit to teach children: he’s no preacher.”

“I tell you, in God’s sight he’s no preacher who does not care for the children.”

John Piper (*Let the Children Come to Me*) offers this warning to those who belittle reaching children for Christ:

If you are receiving the kingdom yourself like a little child, then you will not do anything to hinder little children from coming to Jesus.

Children Will Come to Jesus If We Do Not Hinder Them

Our responsibility is to make sure we get things out of the way that hinder them coming to Jesus.

When we protect a child from harm, we're only doing what God has already done.

Slide 10: The Watching Angels Matthew 18:10

"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (v. 10)

Check out that phrase: *"their angels in heaven."* Is this a reference to what we commonly call **"guardian angels"**? **Perhaps.** Certainly it means that the angels of God watch over little children.

So I think about my children and my grandchildren. They are never from my mind, and no one has to remind me to think about them.

How much more will God take care of my children and grandchildren.

If I, a very imperfect father and grandfather, feel that way about my children and grandchildren, how much more does God love them.

How much more will God take care of them.

How much more will he watch out for them.

If my children are precious to me, if my grandchildren mean so much to me, do they mean any less to God? They are far more precious, for he sends his angels to watch them while they sleep. Sometimes when I'm busy, I don't think about them. But the Lord never forgets.

Slide 11: he Knows Them All

He remembers them all. He never gets their names mixed up.

God knows our children by name, individually and personally, and he knows which is which and never gets them mixed up.

Our God sees and knows all the little children of the world. Every time we move with love and compassion on behalf of children, born and unborn, we are doing that which is dear to the heart of God.

From this preacher's heart I declare to you what I fervently believe. **The Lord Jesus is on the side of those who love little children.** And we are on his side when we stand up for them.

We're doing what Jesus would do.

We're doing what he did when he took the children in his arms and blessed them.

In its widest embrace, this principle involves all those who love little children.

It includes an army of doctors and nurses who treat infants and young boys and girls. It includes those who teach our children. It certainly includes those who rescue children from brutality, abuse, slavery and sexual exploitation.

God bless every Sunday School teacher who comes week after week to teach children.

God bless the Vacation Bible Camp staff and volunteers.

God bless those who lead kids clubs and summer youth camps.

God bless those who take in foster children.

God bless those who adopt children.

God bless those who care for children with special needs.

God bless those who lead Children's Church.

God bless those who write good books for children and design safe toys for them and sing to them and pray with them and for them.

When we give our money to those who help unwed mothers, we are doing the work of Jesus.

When we give our time to counsel the confused, we are doing the work of Jesus.

When we urge our leaders to protect the unborn, we are doing the work of Jesus.

When volunteers help at pregnancy centres, they are doing the work of Jesus.

When we speak out on behalf of those who have no voice, we are doing the work of Jesus.

When we risk misunderstanding and embarrassment to save lives, we are doing the work of Jesus.

As the old chorus says, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world." We need to add that he loves those little children even before they come out of their mother's womb.

There are many reasons why we oppose abortion, and chief among them is this. **We are for Jesus . . . and Jesus is for children.**

That's why he said, *"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."*

Slide 12: A Very Personal Question Matthew 18:3, 19:14

"I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven." "The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."

This statement of Jesus leads to a very personal question. Do you want to go to heaven? It's very simple, really. Turn from your sins. Just become like a little child. That's all.

—Come to Jesus and say, "I'm trusting in you for forgiveness and eternal hope."

That's like a child. . . . Humility . . . Total dependence . . . Complete honesty . . . No cover-ups . . . No games . . . No pride . . . No conditions . . . No deals.

May we always keep the words of this familiar children's hymn in mind:

Jesus loves me! He who died Heaven's gate to open wide;

He will wash away my sin, let His little child come in.

And the chorus is a wonderful affirmation of faith:

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Heaven is for people who aren't ashamed to become like children. That's the only way anyone ever gets in.

The door to enter the Kingdom of Heaven is open to those who are not ashamed to come as little children.

Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.

Closing Prayer:

Gracious Father,

We thank You for the gentle yet powerful reminder today that Your kingdom belongs to the humble, the trusting, and the pure in heart. Thank You for our children—for their laughter, their questions, their wonder—and for the way they reflect Your love so clearly.

Help us, Lord, to receive Your kingdom like a child: with open hands, open hearts, and a deep sense of awe. Strip away our pride, our striving, and our need to be first.

May we never be a stumbling block to the little ones You cherish. Instead, let us be their advocates, their encouragers, their protectors. Let our lives be a living invitation that says, "Come to Jesus."

As we go from this place, may we carry the spirit of childlike faith into every corner of our lives. And may we always remember: in Your eyes, greatness begins with humility.

In the name of Jesus, who welcomed the children and calls us to do the same, we pray.

Amen.