

St Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Pentecost 20 – October 15th and 18th, 2009

Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “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.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Dear Children of God,

The other night I was watching a baseball game. The cameras zoomed in on a group of small children who were jumping up and down after a nice play was made. The announcers commented that these children were really enjoying the game. It took me back to the days when I was younger and would go to many of the Brewers games – sitting out in the bleachers when the tickets didn't cost you an arm and a leg.. They weren't very good back then, but it was fun to go to the game. I was always thankful for my parents who would take me to the games. Without their getting me there, I would have never been able to enjoy the games. Maybe you too can remember similar events in your life where your parents brought you to events that were fun and enjoyable.

Today we also have adults who were bringing their children to a special event. They were bringing them to see Jesus. At first glance, it might not seem like that big of a deal. But upon closer examination, we can see that this was one of the best things that these adults could have done for these children. They brought them to see Jesus and to be blessed by Jesus. As they children grew up, I bet that they would have recognized that it was very important for their parents to bring them to Jesus, because Jesus most certainly blessed them. Our theme for today will talk about this very thing:

Sermon Theme: Jesus Touches Children With His Blessing.

- 1. Through faithful parents**
- 2. Through his Word**

“People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them.” Luke's gospel tells us that people were also bringing their babies to Jesus. Why? They wanted Jesus to touch them. But more than that from verse 16 we are told that Jesus was blessing the children. Literally, the word means “to speak well” or “to say good things.” What “good things” do you think Jesus said to these little ones as he took them in his arms, hugged them, and embraced them? He told them that he loved them. He told them the Word. Can't you just hear him telling these children stories from the Old Testament–Daniel in the Lion's Den, Parting of the Red Sea...Jesus gave to these children what they needed. He gave them his time. He gave them attention. But most of all he gave them his love.

“But the disciples rebuked them.” “Come on, now. The teacher is too busy. He doesn't have time to play with your children. Take them away. You're bothering us!” **“But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant”** These disciples thought that they needed to protect Jesus from these parents and their children. But the children needed protection from the disciples. “Stop it, you guys! What are you doing? Don't do that! Leave those children alone! Let them come to me! Don't stop them because the kingdom of heaven belongs to little ones like these.”

I don't doubt that children who knew Jesus loved him and ran up to him and hugged him, hung on his leg, pulled on his robe, played with his beard, touched his face, put their head on his chest, held his carpenter hands, walked along with him and talked with him, asking him questions. I don't doubt it. But our text makes the point to tell us that people, parents, were bringing little children to Jesus.

And why? Because they saw him as a celebrity and wanted to get his autograph? Did they look at Jesus like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny? No! They knew who Jesus was, they knew what he did, what he could do, and what he would give their little children and knew that it was what they needed the most. So they deliberately and intentionally brought their children to Jesus so that he could bless them. Parents, your children need you—big or little! Nowhere in this text, and in the Bible for that matter, does it ever say “Let your children choose for themselves what they want to believe.” “Let your children decide for themselves what is truth.” “Let a child go in whatever way he or she wants to go.” Would a parent ever think of putting a spoon and knife before a newborn saying, “Choose which one you would like to play with.” Would a parent ever take Flintstones vitamins and their pain meds and say, “Choose for yourselves which ones you want to eat?”

Proverbs 22:6 says **“Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it.”** You train your child by giving them Jesus, by bringing them to Jesus. And parents, you know more than anyone that your children need Jesus because they are sinful. You see your traits, your behaviors you don’t like in you in them. And so your children need you to bring them to Jesus so that can hear Jesus tell them “good things”, how much he loves them, about the cross where he died for them, about the grave from which he rose and about the crown which he will give them when he sees them in heaven. Bring your children to Jesus whenever you can, not just for church and Sunday School, but every day so that when they are old, when they will need Jesus even more, when they will need relief from guilt, when they will need help and guidance and direction even more because they may have children of their own, because when they are old they will not turn away from it.

And we've got to do what these adults did. We've got to bring kids: our kids, our grandkids, and as much as it lies within our power even other kids-- we've got to bring kids to Christ. And how does that happen? Well, let me tell you. I can give you the first clue by pointing to something right up front here in church. I am, right now, standing no more than twenty-five feet from a place where the words of our text played out this morning and for many of you gathered here this today. It is the baptismal font where little children have been brought to be blessed by Jesus. You see, it's in baptism that little children first get to know Jesus.

So, that's the first thing we do in order to bring children to Jesus. We get them baptized-- even as babies. Jesus says: **“Let the little children come to me.”** Acts 2:38-39 says: **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and for your children.”** Babies need their sins washed away-- just like we do. And serious shame on those Christians who forbid kids from being baptized!

Another thing we've got to do in order to bring our kids, grandkids, and other kids to Christ, is to keep them growing in God's Word. In baptism God washed our babies, but we've also got to make sure that they are being fed day by day-- and if we don't, they'll spiritually starve to death. See, that's why we make sure that they are being fed with God's Word.

Already at ages one or two, kids love listening to stories. Why not get a Bible story book from the local Christian bookstore and read to your children or grandchildren? Already at ages two or three, kids like watching movies. Why not get them some decent videos that have to do with the Bible -- there are a lot of them out there -- and show those to your children or grandchildren? Already at ages three or four, kids can take care of themselves well enough to attend Sunday School. Why not call the church office, see to it that your child is enrolled, and then make sure that your child gets to attend Sunday School.

Already at ages four or five, it's time for kids to go off to school. Why not consider sending yours to our school – Trinity St. Luke’s Lutheran School? You see, our congregation's dedication to Christian education for our children is actually written into our purpose statement and our constitution. Our budget dedicates much of our yearly budget to our school. Why not consider sending your children to our school?

And then by ages twelve to fourteen, it's time for confirmation instruction-- the one big opportunity for a Christian to get his or her first full look at all of what the Bible teaches. Even if you've been a little behind the

curve on all of this, why don't you look to get your kids, your grandkids, and other kids into confirmation instruction this coming year? Just talk to one of the pastors.

Parents – your children need you! And you need them! Parents(adults) need little children. Jesus tells us, **“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”** Jesus is not saying we have to be a child to enter the kingdom of God. But we are to be child-like. And you know what children are like. Children are not complicated. They're simple; easy to understand. They are open and honest; curious about so many things. But this is what is so interesting about children. Are they ever afraid to let you know how they are feeling? When they are upset; when they want love. When they are in trouble, hurt, afraid – what does a child do? Try and figure it out themselves? Just sit there hurt, scared and terrified? No! They look to mom or dad for help because little children are helpless, especially little babies. They are completely dependent on others. Be child-like--helpless and completely dependent on no one but Jesus Christ. Realize that there is nothing you can do to earn the kingdom of God, but simply believe that Jesus is your Savior and Lord and you will receive the kingdom of God.

And trust Jesus just like a child. Little children don't question a thing! A little three year old will believe anything you tell them. Take Jesus at his Word--whatever he tells you! Jesus tells you to come to him like a little child so that he can put his loving arms around you and tell you good things. Believe him! Jesus tells you that he forgives you for not making him a priority in your life and your child's life. Don't question him! Believe him like a little child! Jesus tells you that his Word is the one thing needful. Believe him like a child and then make his Word a priority in your life, your family's life.

Parents, grandparents, guardians--it's not too late. It's never too late. Your children are always your children. Bring them to Jesus. Give them to Jesus. They are so very special to him. And so are you. And don't forget that you need Jesus more than your children because your children need you. And we all need them. We need their example. Have that trusting, believe anything, child-like faith and yours is the kingdom of heaven. Amen