

THE RADICAL RABBI: "A RADICAL VALUE"

Mark 10:13-16

9.27.20

INTRODUCTION

There are some very special moments in this earthly life that God grants us the blessing of experiencing. One of those is here today - celebrating the life of a child. What an amazing wonder and miracle that is, that Almighty Sovereign God would actually choose us to be allowed the privilege of caring for such an incredibly special part of His creation.

In fact, it is so special that we are going to spend our entire morning with a message - and even an object lesson - dedicated to the blessings God has graciously granted us in the kids that are a part of our homes. I feel that I have the experience for this, being both a parent and a former child myself.

Certainly, Christ during His time on earth considered kids to be something so very special. How special? Well, one day, He had a very interesting interaction with some kids, their parents, and His disciples - a memorable moment that on this very memorable day might be well worth our time to revisit. But before we do that, let's **seek the Lord in prayer.**

TEXT (Mark 10:13-16)

People were bringing little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on 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. Truly I tell you, 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, placed His hands on them and blessed them - Mark 10:13-16.

OK; there's the slide containing this story, but I'm kinda gonna tell it in my own words - the way I might have told it to my girls at bedtime:

One time a bunch of parents were bringing their little kids to where Jesus was, hoping that He would place His hands on them, and pray for them. Now in ancient cultures, you know, a long time ago like in Bible times, kids didn't seem to matter much; in fact, they were pretty much considered second-class citizens. For instance, if there was a big crowd of people to be counted, kids weren't even included in the count (of course, neither were moms). In fact, the younger a child was, the less value he was seen to have due to less time, effort and expense having been put into that young child versus an older one. They were essentially not seen as much more than additional property that the father had picked up along the way.

But nevertheless, some parents were really intent on Jesus placing His hands on their little ones and blessing them. They seemed to understand that this "Radical Rabbi" seemed to value everybody, including kids, in a far different way than was generally found. And their kids seemed to be drawn to Jesus as well. So, what possible harm could come from asking Him to hold onto their precious little ones and bless them?

That, unfortunately, was before the disciples took a peek at what was happening - and they were pretty upset about it, too. What did these people think they were doing? I can

almost see them trying to intervene, saying something along the lines of, "Have y'all lost your minds?" C'mon; an important person like Jesus, doing all He was doing with His teaching and healing, should never be bothered by a bunch of little kids hanging around Him. Some healing - well maybe, you know, if a kid was really sick or something. But otherwise, forget about it! So, with that wonderful, evangelical spirit in mind (ha ha), the disciples tried to shoo everybody off - you know, "Get away, get away; Jesus doesn't have time for this. Just go back home. You can't expect somebody as important as Jesus of Nazareth to drop everything He's doing just to be with a bunch of little kids."

Now when Jesus saw this, the Bible says He was "indignant" - which is another way of saying He was seriously "ticked off" here. Who were they to try and keep little kids away from Him? Jesus always had time for kids; they were always important to Him. And He said so: "Will you guys knock it off. Don't keep these kids away from Me. Don't ever keep kids away from Me."

And then Jesus said a really cool thing: "Don't you know that the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God Himself, is made up of people just like these little kids? So, let them come, OK? I want to see them." And the Bible says that He did exactly what the parents had hoped: He took those little people in His arms, He placed His hands on them, and He blessed them - meaning that He prayed for them, asking that God would kindly love them, protect them, and guide them through each day of their lives.

So, what did Jesus mean that heaven was made up of people like these little ones? OK; no matter what your ages here today, I got a question for you: Do you ever remember standing on steps or maybe on a chair or desktop, and your dad standing a little bit away, with his hands and arms outstretched, waiting for you to jump? Do you remember that you never had to wonder if your dad would catch you? No - you never thought about it because you knew your dad would catch you. You knew he loved you and cared about you and would never let anything hurt you. If he said, "Jump," you knew he'd be there. You know what? That's what faith is - jumping into Jesus' arms, knowing that He will always be there, knowing that He will always catch you.

Now Jesus was not saying by these words that children were automatically saved. But what He was saying was that the kingdom of heaven was going to be populated not by the greatest or the strongest or the smartest or the fastest or any other measure. Instead, the population of the kingdom of heaven was going to be made up of people who come to God just like little kids come to their parents - completely dependent, knowing that they can't do anything otherwise. That's how God wants us to see Him - from a viewpoint of our likewise being completely helpless outside of Him, unable to do anything without Him, and letting that helplessness drive us to God.

Wow! Jesus used little kids to teach a really important lesson: God seeks people who understand their helplessness without Him, people who see that they are the least before God and can do nothing on their own to earn His favor. That understanding is precisely what does earn God's favor.

APPLICATION

Now, I think that most of you know that I love history so, naturally, whenever I get a chance to pull some historical context into messages, I go for it. This morning would be a great example. I'm going to show you all some historical figures - some known for amazingly wonderful things, some known for amazingly terrible things, so here goes: What do these four (4) historical characters have in common? I'll give you a hint; it's the same thing that these historical figures have in common. Give up? Once upon a time, they were the same age as our dedicated little girl Nola - who turns 1 tomorrow!

It's kinda wild to think about - Adolf Hitler needing to be changed, Joseph Stalin crawling on the floor, Gandhi trying to take his first steps, Billy Graham trying to say his first words. Even our contemporary leaders, so much in the news these days, were once upon a time known only by very immediate family even as they navigated all these similar markers of growing up, along with all the other parts of moving on from infancy, including falling down, bumping their heads, and crying their eyes out whenever they had need. Even Jesus of Nazareth - our "Radical Rabbi," was once dealing with every infant's developmental phases as well. In His case, that's the great miracle for which there are really no words - that the God of heaven and earth, who created everything that has ever been made (including us), once upon a time became us, in the person of Jesus Christ, with the plan and desire to save us. Wow! That's what Paul was thinking about when he wrote this to the Philippian church: *[Christ Jesus] made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness - Paul, Philippians 2:7.*

But there's more - something amazing that we can know just by the fact that Jesus Christ came to live on earth, and it's this: He gets us. He knows us. He knows what living on planet earth is like. The author of the book of Hebrews tells us that, in His coming to earth, Jesus *shared in [our] humanity, He [was] made like [us] fully human in every way* and, because He became one of us, as the author of Hebrews goes on to say, *we do not have [a Savior and] a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - Hebrews 2:14a, 17a; 4:15.* Wow!

CONCLUSION (child participation)

Now remember those pictures we showed just a bit ago - Hitler, Stalin, Manson, bin Laden? Why did they turn out like they did, all of them considered some of the most evil people who have ever lived? It's all about what they did with Jesus. Interestingly, history tells us that they certainly had some opportunity to hear about Him. Consider: Hitler for a time thought about entering the priesthood. Joseph Stalin actually attended seminary for some five years as a young man. At the age of 13, Charles Manson was placed in a home for male delinquents run by Catholic priests. In 1971, Osama bin Laden, who had a deep interest in religion, was a student in an English-language course in Oxford, England.

Unfortunately, their lives created a reality far different than what a relationship with Christ might have created. Hitler instigated World War II, which killed between 40-60 million people, including an estimated 10 million in his death and concentration camps.

Stalin, according to modern estimates, is thought to have killed as many as nine million of his own people in the 1930s before the horrors of fighting Nazi Germany in the 1940s resulted in approximately 20 million more Russian deaths. Charles Manson of course was the driving force behind the "Manson Family" of the 1960s who are known to have murdered nine people, and very possibly many more. Osama bin Laden, of course, is considered the mastermind behind the attacks of 9/11 which are thought to have killed just under 3,000 Americans. On the other hand, Billy Graham showed what a life surrendered to Christ can do to impact the world: Over 58 years of ministry, Billy Graham preached at some 417 crusades that took place in 185 countries and territories. (Just to give some idea, there are a total of 195 countries in the world today.) It is estimated that approximately 84 million people saw him in person; in addition, some 215 million heard his crusades over satellite feeds. Quite a difference - and it's all about Jesus.

Now, I want all school-age kids and below to come forward. Parents, if your kids seem a bit shy, please feel free to come up here with them. Now I want to give you all something to remind you of what place Jesus Christ provides for us: He is our access to God. You ever come to your house and found the front door locked? What would allow you to get in through that door? A key. The right key allows you to unlock the door and gain access to your house.

Guys, Jesus does the same thing for us with God. In fact, the apostle Paul even told us as much. He wrote this to the Ephesian Christians: ***[T]hrough [Christ] we have access to the Father - Paul, Ephesians 2:18.*** Do you understand? Jesus is our "key" to coming to God, to find forgiveness for our sins, and to claim a home in heaven with Him - forever!

So here on this plate are a bunch of keys. Each one of them is the same; they all have a picture of a cross. You may each take one. I hope you keep it with you, to always remind you of what Jesus has done for you, and what He gives you access to - God, our wonderful Heavenly Father! And parents, that's part of the wonderfully privileged gig we have - to explain to our kids all that we have "access" to through Jesus Christ, that they may come to know Jesus themselves as the "key" to the greatest life imaginable. Let's pray