

“Childlike Faith is Heavenly”

Mark 10:13-16, “And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, ‘Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*.’ And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them.”

Luke 18:16-17, “Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*.”

Mark 9:36-38, “Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.’”

Jesus loved children, and they responded to His love. But, what is Jesus saying? Jesus tells the disciples unless they are changed [converted] and become like a child they won’t get into heaven.

But children aren’t sinless, they are self-centered and self-consumed from a very early age. Some of their first words are “mine!” “no!” and “I want!” The sinful nature is clearly expressed in children, so what is Jesus saying here?

Children are also vulnerable, naive, trusting of others, their minds haven’t become fully polluted yet by the godless world around us, a world that strongly encourages a sense of self-importance and entitlement!

But children are usually more easily frightened, ordered about, and humbled as a result of their own insignificance. In order to enter heaven, Jesus says we must turn from self-reliance and self-importance to relying on God alone to save us.

Jesus says we must become humble, we must be converted; we must turn away from any sense of self-importance or self-sufficiency, and realize our great need for Jesus Christ, to receive God’s love and forgiveness, to become His child.

It is the one who humbles himself, like this child being held in the arms of Jesus (**Mark 9:36**), there in Peter’s house, in front of the disciples; this child is safe and secure in the arms of God, what could be any better than that?

Many of you may not know the name Helen Keller, but she was born in 1880, in West Tuscumbia, Alabama; and was a normal baby until about 18-19 months of age, when she contracted scarlet fever, and she became deaf, blind, and mute.

Her family hired a woman (Anne Sullivan) who would be her first teacher and caregiver, through whom Helen learned how to communicate via touch, and eventually she learned to talk, read and write.

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After an education at both specialist and mainstream schools, Keller attended Radcliffe College of Harvard University and became the first deafblind person in the United States to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Keller became a prolific author, writing 14 books and many essays, and gave many speeches campaigning for those with disabilities, for women's suffrage, for labor rights, and for world peace.

Helen Keller was a devout Christian and later in her life, looking back on her years of silence and darkness, she wrote, “I always knew [God] was there. I just did not know His name.” (*The Story of My Life* [New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1905], pp. 368-74) wow!

God’s general revelation of Himself has been clearly seen, long before telescopes and microscopes gave us glimpses into the micro and macro world around us, God had wonderfully displayed Himself throughout the universe, we just need to open our eyes, ears, and heart, to all that is around us.

Psalms 19:1-4, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”

Romans 1:18-20, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

There is a preponderance of evidence of God displayed in creation. God wants us to know Him. The writer of **Hebrews** says (**11:6**), “Without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that [God] is [has always existed] and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

Jeremiah 29:11-12, “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.”

1 Timothy 2:3-4, “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all [people] to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Matthew 19:14, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

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Back in 2015, the National Association of Evangelicals discovered from one of their surveys that the largest percentage of Christians accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior between the ages of 4-14.

Since it is children between the ages of 4-14 who are more likely to embrace the gospel, we have to make sure that ministry to children is a priority.

Tomorrow we begin VBA 2024. Our Trinity Baptist Church family has come here for the purpose of bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the kids in our community. We have prayed many months for this week, and we look with anticipation at what God is going to do in the hearts of many children.

*God's love is freely given and freely received, at the moment of genuine belief God becomes the Father of those who believe in Him (**Romans 3:10-12, 23-24; 6:23a; 5:8; 6:23b; 8:1-2; 10:9-10, 13**).*

God provides forgiveness and eternal life (cf. **John 14:6**), Jesus is the only way to God, the only truth of God, and the only life with God, and God lovingly and freely reveals this to little children.

Jesus loves little children, their tender hearts and minds; a child may easily trust in Jesus, where as an adult is much more reluctant to respond because they lack the innocent faith and trusting nature of a child. It was God's desire and pleasure to provide His gospel of salvation to trusting, believing, and receptive hearts:

VBA starts tomorrow, the children who come will be told about Jesus Christ all through the week; and for many of them it may be the very first time they have been introduced to the God Who loves them so much, that He laid down His own life in order to save them.

All true believers and followers of Christ will sincerely desire that children hear the good news and come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is our deepest prayer that nothing will hinder the children who come to (VBA) Vacation Bible Adventure this week, and that they will be led to saving faith during this God-given opportunity for children to come to know God's Son.

Please be praying for all of those who are serving this week at VBA, sharing the Love of God in multiple ways, at various times, with these little ones who come.

Please be praying for the children, that their hearts might be tender and receptive, and that they will hear and believe the Good News of Jesus Christ, God's Son, Lord and Savior, Who loves them now and forever.

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There is a song that speaks of Jesus’ love for children, for you, and for me, it is called, **Jesus Loves Me**, and it has been sung by children (and adults) since it was written in 1860 by Anna Bartlett Warner. The lyrics of this song express God's deep deep love for all of us, but especially for children. The words are in your bulletin, would you please sing them with me.

Verse 1, “Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong; they are weak, but He is strong.” *Refrain: “Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.”*

Verse 2, Jesus loves me this I know, as He loved so long ago, taking children on His knee, saying ‘Let them come to Me.’ *Refrain: “Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.”*

Verse 3, “Jesus loves me still today, walking with me on my way, wanting as a friend to give light and love to all who live.” *Refrain: “Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.”*

Verse 4, Jesus loves me! He who died heaven’s gate to open wide; He will wash away my sin, let His little child come in.” *Refrain: “Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.”*

Benediction

Matthew 18:4-5, “Whoever humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me.”

Luke 18:16-17, “Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all.*”

Pastor Mike Hale