

September 2, 2018

“Let the Children Come to Me”
Matthew 19:13-15

FCF: Paradoxical confusion about the value of children

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus has called us into kingdom community.

magnet) We must approach our relationships in a new way - including with our children.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

When it comes to our view of children, we are hampered by a paradoxical confusion. On the one hand, there is our idealization of children. Yes, we feel a natural affection for our offspring. But that can go to seed when we put them on pedestals as though they were paragons of innocence. That’s one extreme. Swinging over to the other, we shift from idealization to resentment. Raising children is an emotionally taxing, expensive, time-intensive responsibility. But that does not often fit our selfish individualistic agendas. And that can create resentment.

So there you have it, this paradoxical confusion. On the one hand, we have our idealization of children. On the other, we have resentment. And popular media feeds both. We need some clarity to cut through this confusion. And the Scriptures are greatly helpful here.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Matthew 19:13-15](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

We’ve been talking over the last several weeks about how Jesus calls us into kingdom community. This is a theme that runs right through chapters 18 and 19 of Matthew’s Gospel. Our response to sin - both within us and between us - is to be different. The way we approach interpersonal conflict - how we confront and how we forgive - is to be different. Which leads right into the family. How we think of marriage, divorce, and singlehood is to be different.

And the same holds true for how we view our children. Jesus has called us into kingdom community. We must then approach our relationships in a whole new way - including with our children. We are to be a kingdom community. That means that in all these things we are to live in a way that is different than the world around us and the way we once lived ourselves.

Including with our children. Looking at our text, this comes out quite clearly in two ways. First, in how we see our children. And then, second, in how we love our children.

I. HOW WE SEE OUR CHILDREN

First, how we see our children, our perspective on them ([READ Matthew 19:13-15](#)).

A) The View of the Disciples

Clearly, we can see a difference here in the view of the disciples and the view of Jesus.

1. The attitudes of the time

It’s worth knowing what the attitudes of the time were towards children. As in our own day, there was an odd tension. Children were deeply treasured. But at the same time, they were of little value as members of society. There was a real “they should be seen and not heard” idea.

2. The response of the disciples

So that's the backdrop to the response of the disciples. That's what fed whatever annoyance they may have felt about a delay or a perceived interruption. And so they "rebuked" these parents for bringing their children to Jesus. Meaning that they sharply disapproved and tried to prevent it.

B) The View of Jesus

Which is quite a contrast to the way Jesus responds. He all but rebukes the rebukers.

1. As metaphors of humility

Why? For starters, He cherishes these children as metaphors of humility. We saw this a few weeks ago ([READ Matthew 18:1-4](#)). Children tend to embody the attitudes needed to enter the kingdom - trust, vulnerability, dependency. They are a living parable. And so they are valued.

2. As members of the kingdom

But it's more than that. Jesus sees these children not just as metaphors of humility but as members of His kingdom. We need to see this scene as it was unfolding. Jesus was not just looking past these children but at them. He is saying these parents and these children were part of His kingdom even though nothing is said about these young ones doing anything themselves.

This is how Jesus sees the children of believers. And it is how we should as well.

Application:

How should we see our children? What are they? They are fallen image bearers, glorious ruins. Of great value but broken by the sin and fall of Adam and so in need of Jesus.

That's crucial. What else can we say? They are children of the covenant with Abraham ([READ Genesis 17:7](#)). They are children of the promise. Which means, rock bottom, we need to see them not as just pagans to be converted but as members of God's family to be discipled. This is the way Paul addresses children in his letters, as disciples. They have a standing before God. All of which is to say we are to parent not in fear but in faith. We are to instruct them not in how to become God's child but how to live as His children. We pray for them not so much to be saved but to lay hold of what we've taught them. And all this can be done in confidence - not in our efforts but in His promise. For great as our love is for our children, God's love is greater.

None of that eliminates the trials and testing or the possibility they may drift, walk away, or reject the faith. None of that eliminates the necessity of regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. But Christian parents have cause for hope. Jesus has called us into kingdom community. We must approach our relationships in a new way - including with our children.

II. HOW WE LOVE OUR CHILDREN

That's how we should see them. How should we love them? ([READ Matthew 19:13-15](#))

A) By Bringing Them

The first thing we see in terms of how to love our children is to bring them to Jesus.

1. The custom

It was customary for parents to bring their children to rabbis and to elders to be blessed.

2. The assumption

And Jesus was not only able to bless them but longing to do so. Think of the context. Jesus was on His way to where? To Jerusalem. He knew what awaited Him. But He took time for this.

B) By Blessing Them

We are called just so to bring our children to Jesus. And, as His followers, to bless them.

1. Laying hands

The laying on of hands was the traditional way of conferring a blessing, especially when passed down generationally. It's a tangible physical act representing an intangible spiritual thing.

2. The significance

And doing so recognizes the reality that there is a blessing to be conveyed. There is faith and hope, grace and mercy, and a loving God to whom we can look and on whom we can rely.

The patterns set forth here guide us into how we are to see and to love our children.

Application:

The children of this body are anything but a distraction to the work of the gospel. They are essential to it. They must never be seen in terms of shallow utility or pragmatics but always as a vital part of the faith community, needing our sacrificial efforts and ever worthy of them.

Let me press this home. This means that no few of us should be gladly signing up to help in the nursery and our children's ministries. We should never see someone running about with a clipboard begging people to serve. Rather, folks should be standing in line, hoping for a turn.

This also means we should be supporting those who are fostering children and struggling through the steps to adopt. We should learn the names of all these young ones, pray for them regularly, and be far quicker to smile at them than to frown. Jesus has called us into kingdom community. We must approach our relationships in a new way - including with our children.

CONCLUSION:

Thinking back to where we started, the Scriptures show us an utterly different path than we might otherwise take - not the idealization of our children nor the resentment of our children but the glad treasuring of our children (**READ Psalm 127:3-5**). Our children are gifts of God.

If we can consider a different metaphor, just think in terms of gardening. Children need constant nurturing if they are to flourish spiritually. So what does the gardener need to do? To approach the task with certain goals in mind, staying focused on these and being ever protective of these little plants. For we long to see them first come to faith and to then grow in Christlike character and service. Those are the goals. We long for that and labor with that in mind.

And what the Scriptures show us is that Christian parents can and should engage in that labor with a confident expectation. Sowing the seed, tending the soil, and relying on the Lord to bring the growth however and whenever He so chooses. For Jesus has called us into kingdom community. We must approach our relationships in a new way - including with our children.

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