

JESUS AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN

Mark 10:13-16

Intro: Today is Easter Sunday, the one day in the year when professing Christians throughout the world remember the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet for instructed Christians, every Sunday is resurrection Sunday because, while we don't know the exact day when the Lord Jesus died, nor the date of His resurrection, we do know that it was on the first day of the week. The early church met daily for some time following the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, but Sunday became the day when the churches met for prayer, the teaching of the Scriptures, the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and giving. In Acts 20 we read that Paul and several other believers went to a city called Troas. And verse 7 of Acts 20 tell us this:

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . .

We also read in the last chapter of 1 Corinthians that Paul instructed the church there with these words:

1 Now concerning the collection of the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him . . .

The believers were not under orders to get together on the first day of the week. It was what they wanted to do. It was their way of commemorating the resurrection of Christ. And this is what getting together of Sundays ought to mean to us today. The resurrection is a vital part of the Gospel message. It is so vital that without the resurrection of Christ there would be no Gospel. The Bible teaches us that all Three Persons of the Godhead were active in the resurrection of Christ. That shows how very important the resurrection of Christ was, and still continues to be. The resurrection of Christ was evidence that Christ had successfully atoned for the sins of all who were to be saved, that His sacrificial work was accepted by the Father, and that even death itself was conquered by His death on the Cross. And when we talk about the resurrection of Christ, we are not talking about some way in which He lived on in the hearts of those who believed in Him. We are talking about a real resurrection, a physical resurrection, that He came out of the tomb in the same body in which He had been crucified, brought back to life, never to die again. And it is because He lives, that we know that, even though we may die before the Lord returns, we will be raised from the dead. If we live until He comes, we are going to be changed so that we will never die. The death and

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resurrection of Christ are the focal points of all history. It is that which was prophesied throughout the OT, described in the four Gospels, and wonderfully explained in the epistles of the NT. If it were not for the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we would have no Bibles. We would still be under the judgment of God, with no hope whatsoever that we would ever be saved. Heaven would be out of the picture for us.

I know that most of you understand what I have been saying, *and that you believe it to be true!* I wish that everyone believed it because there is no other way to be saved from our sins, and to know that some day we are going to be in heaven with the Lord. There are not many ways to be saved. There is only one way. There are many religions in the world, but there is only one, true way to be saved, and that is through faith in Jesus Christ and the sacrifice that He offered to God when He suffered and died on the Cross. If I told you anything else, I would be lying to you. This is one issue, the salvation of your soul and the salvation of my soul, upon which we cannot afford to be wrong. Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by” Him, is what He said, and He never spoke anything but the truth.

I want you to have all of this in your minds as we consider this morning one of the most tender and loving and heart-moving incidents recorded for us in the Scriptures. As many of the stories we have considered in the Gospel of Mark, this incident is included also in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Here in the Gospel of Mark it only occupies four verses. In the Gospel of Matthew, only three verses. In the Gospel of Luke also, three verses. Mark’s account is in chapter 10, verses 13 through 16. In Matthew’s Gospel we find it in chapter 19, verses 13 through 15. In Luke’s Gospel you will find it in chapter 18, verses 15 through 17. I would say that most often in Scripture, the importance of a subject is seen in the space that is given to it in the Bible. But that is not always the case. There are other times when the Holy Spirit had the writers of Scripture devote a very brief space to an event or teaching, to attract our attention and to emphasize its importance. Such is the case with the verses I want to consider with you today.

I am going to read now Mark 10, verse 13 through 16, and I would like for you to follow the reading in your Bible. **(Read Mark 10:13-16.)**

That is all a very simple story, isn’t it? But it is a very wonderful story. And when you compare it with what is going on in our country today, it is

a very unusual story. You don't see this kind of an incident taking place with many people today. We are not told in any of the three Gospels who brought their children to Jesus, but we don't need to be told, do we? It was obviously the parents, fathers and mothers bringing their children to the Lord. The word which Luke used to describe the children, can mean an infant, as it is translated there. And it is used of our Lord when He was a baby, and the shepherds were told that they would find the baby Jesus lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. But the word can also mean a young child, able to walk and to understand what was going on.

You know, this is the time when children need to be brought to Christ. Today this would mean telling them Bible stories, reading the Bible to them, and getting them into a Sunday School where they will learn the stories of the Bible. Children need to learn about Jesus. The trouble is that we wait until our children get into their teen years, when we start to have trouble with them, and then we try to get them to go to church with us, or to find someone who can help us.

There are thousands of parents in America who will walk all over town at Christmas time to take their kids to see Santa Claus, and to have their picture made with him, but those same parents have never said a word to their children about Jesus, and have never taken them to Sunday School, and have never opened the Bible to read to their children. I can visualize those parents in that day, lined up, waiting to bring their children to the Lord, that He might put His hands on them, and, as Matthew said in his account of this event, *to pray for them! And they were doing this, not because they were forced to do it, but because they wanted to do it.* What a sight this must have been. Oh, that we saw more of this today. And we are reaping the harvest of our failure to do this in our country today.

But we see an amazing thing take place. And it had to do with the Lord's disciples. They "rebuked" the parents for what they were doing. This means that they were telling the parents that they were doing the wrong thing to bother the Lord by bringing their children to Him. A lot of us who are adults, are like that. We really don't have time for the children, sometimes for our own children, but can you imagine that the disciples would be the ones to stand between the children and the Lord. They had a lot to learn, didn't they?

How did the Lord react to His disciples? Was He thankful that they were sparing Him from having to take time with the children? He was very

unhappy with them. Mark says that He was “much displeased.” This means that He was moved with indignation. He was very unhappy with the disciples. And I am sure that none of them ever forgot how very displeased the Lord was with them on this occasion. They didn’t know it at the time, but they were playing right into the hands of the Devil. He doesn’t want anyone to come to Christ. He doesn’t want anyone to hear the Gospel. But the Lord Jesus wants every one to hear the Gospel. And so the Lord publicly rebuked His own disciples for standing in the way of what those parents were doing, bringing their children to Him.

And what displeased the Lord when He was here on earth, still displeases Him. No work of God can be true to the Lord unless it makes a place for children, making sure that children are brought to Him.

Most of you know that I worked with Dr. John Mitchell for ten years, and then he graciously encouraged the church to call me as their Pastor when he resigned. I first heard Dr. Mitchell when I was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary. He came to Dallas every year to teach for two weeks, and every time he came there was a revival in the hearts of the faculty and students. We heard him for two hours every day he was there, and most of would have been glad to listen to him for as long as he was able to talk. People loved to hear him teach the Word, and many of you can testify to the blessing that he was in your life.

But one thing I began to learn about Dr. Mitchell when I heard him in Dallas, and then saw in full bloom when I came to Portland, was, that this great Bible teacher who drew hundreds of adults to hear the Word, was a man who had an equal burden for children. He and Mrs. Mitchell were not able to have children, but he had an amazing ministry in Portland to reach children and young people – home Bible clubs. Trout Creek Camp, released time bus ministry, and a strong Sunday School. It made me realize that often the most important work that can go on in a church, is the ministry to children and young people.

The Lord was like that. In fact, it was the Lord Who emphasized reaching children. Even under the Law the Lord through Moses made it very clear that parents were to teach their children. They were to make sure that their children were acquainted with the Word of God, and through the Word would come to know the God of the Word.

But what did the Lord say to His disciples?

He said, “Suffer the little children . . .” He meant that they were not to stand in the way of children coming to Him. On the other hand, they were to do everything possible to encourage parents to bring their children, and to do everything possible to encourage the children to come.

Now there is no guarantee that every child is going to be saved. In fact, we know that many will not be saved. But the Lord wanted His disciples, and us, to do everything within our power to encourage even children to come to Christ.

I have been thinking a lot about the Lord’s words to His disciples. There is much for all of us to learn from a child’s response to the Word of God. As people get older, they seem to have a harder time accepting the truths of God’s Word. As I said before, it is not only important for us to know what the Bible says, but it is also important, very important for us to believe what the Bible says.

God is our Creator, and He seems to have put in the hearts of children more of an inclination to believe the stories of the Bible. I am sure that there are exceptions to what I am about to say, but did you ever have a child argue with you about whether or not God created us. Is it usually a problem to a child that God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” Are children usually inclined to say that the story of Daniel in the lion’s den is not true? And what about Jonah being swallowed by a large fish, and then living to tell about it afterwards. Do they question that the Lord could feed five thousand men, plus women and children, on just a little boy’s lunch? Do children have a problem with Jesus cleansing a leper, or making a blind man see, or even raising the dead?

I learned these stories as a child, and it never entered my mind to question them, or to wonder if my parents and teachers were really telling me the truth. Do children usually have trouble believing Jesus has always lived, and that He was born of Mary, and that He never sinned like all of the rest of us do? Do children give you a bad time about the death of Christ, or about the resurrection of Christ? Do they try to put another meaning on those teachings.

I know that God has to open a child’s heart to the Gospel just as much as He does the heart of an adult. But the Lord seems to have put in a child’s heart (and I give God the glory for it) more of a tendency to accept the teaching of Scripture without any arguments. And what about the Lord’s

return?

Now the Lord said that instead of making children deal with the Bible the way most adults deal with it, questioning it all, if we want to be saved, we must become like little children in our acceptance of the Word of God.

Do you believe that God created the heaven and the earth? Do you believe that He did it just by speaking the words? Do you believe the Lord opened the Red Sea to let the children of Israel go through it? Have you and I ever seen that happen? No. Why do we believe it? We believe it because this is what the Bible says what happened.

When the Lord appeared to His disciples the first time after His resurrection, Thomas was not with them. And when they told him, he said this: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Eight days later the Lord appeared to His disciples again, and this time Thomas was with them. Then we read this:

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed (John 20:27-29).

The world say, "Seeing is believing," but God says, "Believing is seeing." The Lord demands that we come to His Word with believing hearts. We believe what the Bible says because it is God's Word. The Bible says that we are all sinners. It tells us also that Christ died to save sinners. It tells us also that if we trust in what Christ did on the Cross, we will be saved. So like a little child, we are given faith to believe things that go completely beyond our experience, or our ability to prove them except that we take God at His Word. And when we act upon His Word, we know the transforming power of the Gospel, and become the children of God.

And then as the children of God, we continue to trust the Lord just because He has promised to help us, not because we can figure out how He is going to do it. And we know that He is faithful, and that He will not fail us.