

May 7, 2017

“Let the Children Come to Me”

Luke 18:15-17

FCF: The need to know that Jesus is different

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Given that our perspectives are terribly skewed,
(magnet) we need to let Jesus help us see things aright.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

In preparing for this message, I came across this short quote that caught my attention. “Jesus is different.” Well, that’s an understatement. It would be like your soccer team being up 10-0 at the half, the officials calling the game, and your saying just, “We played pretty well.”

Jesus is different. He is different from all other religious leaders, all other teachers. He is different from what most think. And He is different from what most have heard and been taught.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Luke 18:15-17](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

As you study the Gospels, you begin to see there are differences between them. That is, they were written by different authors, to different audiences, with different themes. That said, there are similarities. They are covering much the same events and have the same subject, Jesus. Each is reckoning and wrestling with His mission and authority, His status and perspective.

You might ask, “Is that really important?” Well, the fact is that our perspective, even on the most essential things, is skewed. Our instincts are wrong. Sort of like lemmings. Lemmings have a reputation as masterful burrowers, scoring high on reproduction, and ready to run for the sea, throwing themselves over cliffs when their numbers get too high. But here’s the thing. Lemmings don’t actually do that. That is a myth strangely spread by old Disney nature movies.

Our instincts and perspectives, what we think we know, can be terribly skewed. And, given that our perspectives can be terribly skewed, we need to let Jesus help us see things aright.

This comes out in three ways in our text. First, the value of children to Jesus. Second, in our need to bring our children to Jesus. And, third, in our need to come as children to Jesus.

I. THE VALUE OF CHILDREN TO JESUS

First, the value of children to Jesus. This pushes on our instinct to self-determination, our priorities set according to our selfish whims and wishes, our me-centered desires and demands.

A) They Are Persons, Not Objects

1. God’s image

Children are persons, not objects. They are made in the image of God, according to His likeness.

2. God’s handiwork

They are His handiwork, each a masterpiece, no matter the age or the stage of development.

B) They are Blessings, Not Burdens

They are persons, not objects. And they are also blessings, not burdens.

1. The principle

(**READ Psalm 127:3-5**) Children are a gift from God, whether born to us or adopted by us.

2. The outworking

As such, God intends for us the simple joy of watching and participating in their flourishing. And over time, as they grow, parents often learn deep transformative lessons themselves.

Such is the value of children to Jesus. This is why He called those children that day.

Application:

“How does Jesus see children?” The answer is so clear. As is this, “How should we?”

We have clear answers. And clear direction. These children are image bearers. Partly, that means that they are intellectual, moral, and spiritual beings. Which means that we should be gladly giving ourselves to their development in those areas - gladly, corporately, and sacrificially. Given that our perspectives can be terribly skewed, we need to let Jesus help us see things aright.

II. BRINGING OUR CHILDREN TO JESUS

Which brings us to the second point - the need to bring our children to Jesus. This pushes on our instinct of self-dependence, thinking we have what it takes (**READ Luke 18:15-16a**).

A) Mindful of Their Needs

1. Who they are

We need to be mindful of their needs, aware of who they are. Our children are not blank slates nor innocent angels. They are sinners just like us, “little vipers” according to Jonathan Edwards.

2. What they need

And we need to be aware of what they need. They are image bearers - intellectual, moral, and spiritual creatures. But they are also sinners, needing various forms of instruction and discipline, wise and patient engagement by us of both their minds and hearts. That’s not always so easy.

B) Mindful of Our Needs

So we need to be mindful of their needs. And then mindful of our own as well.

1. Who we are

We need to be aware of who they are as fallen image bearers. But then who we are as well. And also aware that we are divinely designated, authorized and appointed to lead and guide them.

2. What we need

We need to know who we are. And then also what we need. That is, to go to Jesus, resisting all resistance and opposing all opposition. Just as those parents had to do that day to get to Him.

Because of both their needs and ours, we need to be bringing our children to Jesus.

Application:

“How?” you ask. It was so obvious to those parents. But what of us? Take them to His Word. Read with them at bedtime and dinner. Take them to His body. Surround them with His

people, His church. And take them in prayer, fulfilling your promise to pray with and for them. Given that our perspectives can be terribly skewed, we need to let Jesus help us see things aright.

III. COMING AS CHILDREN TO JESUS

Which brings us to this third point, our own need to come as children to Jesus ([READ Luke 18:16b-17](#)). Jesus has spoken to our self-determination and self-dependence. And now He presses on our self-righteousness. Think of these infants. Think of newborns - naked, lying on their back, hands and feet flailing about. Nothing to show for themselves. Just raw dependence.

It's interesting to note what brackets this interaction between Jesus and these children.

A) *Humble Dependence*

1. The parable

We see the need for humble dependence in the parable just before this ([READ Luke 18:9-14](#)).

2. The teaching

The contrast is so clear here. We are not to trust in our own righteousness, our merits or work.

B) *Trusting Dependence*

1. The dialogue

Then, with the other bracket, we see the need for trusting dependence ([READ Luke 18:18-25](#)).

2. The teaching

Jesus is pressing on the idol of this man's heart, showing we are not to trust in our riches but in Him alone. We are to trust and serve Him and not our wealth or anything else in this world.

We are to come as children to Jesus with a humble and a trusting dependence. Those are the brackets around this encounter between Him and these children ([READ Luke 18:16b-17](#)).

Application:

We are to make our model the very youngest among us. We are to make our prayer these beautiful old words from Augustus Toplady's hymn, "Rock of Ages" ([READ stanzas 2-3](#)):

- (2) Not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy laws demands;
could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone; thou must save and thou alone.
- (3) Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling;
naked, come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for grace;
foul, I to the Fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die.

Again, given that our perspectives are so skewed, we need to let Jesus help us see things aright.

CONCLUSION:

There are some parallels here to the correction of our physical sight. Some of you have gone through the LASIK or PRK procedures. From the start, that can be uncomfortable - just the realization that your eyesight has deteriorated to the point that you need such a thing. Then there is the process itself. The pain involved demands a local anesthetic. Which makes sense when you're talking about blades and lasers and your eyes. Then there is the patience needed during your recovery, abiding by the doctor's orders over the coming days and weeks as you heal.

But, in the end, it's worth it. To be able to read the menu board at the local coffee shop, to see the clock across the room when you wake up, to discern the instruction on the traffic signs up ahead - all without contacts or glasses. It's a great relief. You'd never think of going back.

We have a spiritual astigmatism, cataracts of heart both with ourselves and our children. Given that our perspectives are so terribly skewed, we need to let Jesus help us see things aright.

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