

RECEIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

Mark 10:13-16 (Key verse 15)

"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Last week we learned about God's truth regarding the purpose of marriage. Today Jesus again reveals a very important truth regarding how each one of us will be saved. For example, what happens to infants who pass away who are still in their mother's womb? What happens to new born's and little children who pass away? Are they saved and then end in God's kingdom or do they end up in hell? In today's passage Jesus uses little children to illustrate His amazing grace that is freely available for anyone. The passage also tells us what it means to receive the kingdom of God like a little child? Does it mean a little child is pure and holy without sin? Does this mean we have to be like little children? In this passage we will explore what Jesus meant when he said, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. May the Lord help us see and learn about His amazing grace through the illustration of how little children receive the kingdom of God.

Let us look at verse 13, "People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them." It was a Jewish custom of the day to bring children to a spiritual leader who would then lay his hands on the children and bless them. Every parents want what is best for their children most especially for the Lord to bless their life. However, when the people brought the little children to Jesus the disciples rebuked them. This was not a nice rebuke at all, the disciples strongly rebuked the parents not to bring the children to Jesus. They saw the children as a hindrance to the mission and work of Jesus Christ. They had even forgotten their incident, when they argued who would be greatest, that Jesus brought a little child to them and said, "whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me" [Mk 9:37]. And so it was not the first time the disciples had to deal with Jesus and little children. The response of the disciples was completely wrong towards the parents. They were really hash to the parents and so Jesus also responded strongly towards the disciples.

Look at verse 14a, "When Jesus saw this, he was indignant." Jesus was irritated and somewhat also angry towards the disciples. Whenever you hear that Jesus was angry in the Bible you should know that, it is extremely serious matter that is concerned with our eternal destinies. For example, there is another place in the Bible where Jesus was very angry, when he entered the temple and found people selling. He became so angry that he turned the tables and even took a shambok (belt) and started beating all those who were doing such. This was because the people had turned the house of God into a house of robbers, whereas God's house is a place of prayer, meant to reform and return people to God. However, for our passage today, why then was this a serious matter, look at verse 14b, "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." The kingdom of God belonged to such as these, meaning that the kingdom of God belongs to little children. The disciples had become a hindrance by not allowing the little children to come to Jesus, the king of God's kingdom. Let us explore more why this is so serious. In our next bible study you will hear of a rich young ruler who came to Jesus, after his interaction with Jesus, he confessed that he had kept the law since his youth" however he still could not inherit the kingdom of God. Yet Jesus is saying, in verse 14b, let the little children come to me...for the kingdom of God belongs to such as

these. How could this be, little children could not even keep law, and yet the kingdom of God belongs to them. We have a rich young ruler who has kept the law and yet failed to inherit the kingdom of God. We also cannot even say little children believe in God or not, chances are that they do not or that they obey the law. They were even brought to Jesus by their parents not by themselves. And also it did not matter whether the parents were believers or not, Jesus truth was, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belong to such as these." How dare then does the disciples try prevent little children from coming to Jesus. The kingdom of God belongs to them, that means they already have eternal life and are saved. And Jesus mentions nothing about the faith of the parents, or circumcision even baptism. This is a truth for all the children of the world, it does not matter what family religion they are born into. Jesus says little children possess the kingdom of God. That means if they were to die, they would be saved and found in the kingdom of God. And yet still they do not obey the law of God, they have not received or accepted the gospel truth of Jesus Christ. Just look at the amazing grace of God.

This of course raises some serious questions, does it mean the little children are born holy and pure before God? Does it mean little children are without sin? That cannot be, children are corrupt, morally flawed and sinners. David in Psalm 51:5 says, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Before we are even born, by the moment we are conceived in our mother's wombs we are sinners. Romans 3:23 also tells us, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And this is because we are all a race of the first man Adam who fell into sin as Paul explains it in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's [Adam] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Jesus] shall many be made righteous." The bible also says, the wages of sin is death, and so we actually death is a result of sin, and children do pass away, infants in their mother's womb do pass away. This is a sure evidence of sin even in little children. So it is clear that, the reason little children inherit the kingdom of God, is not because they are without sin, pure and holy. They inherit the kingdom of God because though little children are sinners, they are not accountable for believing or not believing, they cannot even repent. In other words, they do not know the difference between right and wrong. They are not accountable for their choices between sin and righteousness. They are at a point where they have not made a conscious choice to sin. In Deut 1:39 we read, "And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad, they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it." Possessing the land here is symbolic for possessing the kingdom of God. Yet still they are conceived in sin and are corrupt. So back to the question, then how come they possess the kingdom of God? Simply put it is because of the special grace of God. It is grace because they did not earn it. It is purely an act of God's amazing grace. It is called special grace or conditional grace because there will be a point in their life where they become accountable, where they get to know difference between good and evil. But until such a time, little children possess God's kingdom and pass through God's judgment.

Look at verse 15, "Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Now Jesus further illustrates how anyone will enter the kingdom of God. Anyone who will enter the kingdom of God should enter God's kingdom like a little child. This is the only way anyone will enter the kingdom of God. However what does it mean to have a child like faith? Little children are simple, trusting, don't have a sense of earning something, not driven by the need to perform in order to gain acceptance, or the need to achieve to receive anything. Jesus says unless we come like this we shall never enter the kingdom of God. The little children possess the kingdom of God purely out of the grace

of God, they have nothing they can use to say, I did this or that, so I am gaining this gift. Receiving the kingdom of God like a little child is the greatest illustration of how anybody enters the kingdom of God or receives salvation. They have nothing to show to prove they deserve to enter the kingdom of God. It is all but by the grace of God that anyone will enter the kingdom of God. A little child is a great illustration of the how the grace of God works. A little child will enter the kingdom of God without ever believing or rejecting the gospel. Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it", Jesus even said truly to express how this truth is important and the sure foundation of our salvation. That anyone who will not receive the kingdom of like a little child will never enter it. This truth means that, we can only enter the kingdom of God with same qualifications of a little child. And their qualifications is simply NOTHING. Nothing to show at all, all that counts is the mercy and grace of God. Salvation is indeed God's grace alone.

I am generally a performance driven person, I naturally compete even when I do not want to compete I would still find myself competing. And also wanting to be seen by others as a person who achieves and better than others. So after my masters studies I regarded myself to be a good performing Christian. I mean I took three taxis to work in Pretoria and another four taxis to return to Johannesburg. So I could serve and participate in our ministry since we were a young ministry by then. I served two brother with bible studies and so one. Would sometimes overhear missionaries saying were amazed by my faith and all. I think I regarded myself a very good Christian. At my work place I met a lady who had challenges with suicidal issues. While trying to help her, I ended becoming too attached and committed sexual immorality. This gave a great blow, now I had nothing to show to validate my good Christianity. I was simply a wretched sinner who deserved God's punishment. I even became fatalistic and felt not deserving to even come to Church or even serve bible studies. Though I confessed my sin I could not escape the guilt and have God's peace in my heart. All my good works for serving God could not help me approach God, non of my so called accolates could help me have God's peace. I really felt I deserved God's punishment, hoping that God would do something terrible to me so that I could feel the Lord had now dealt with and I was now ok with him. I remember one day passing an old woman who ended up greeting me, and her greeting me felt so good, because at that time I really felt I deserved noting good. I remember even having tears just because she simply greeted me. I wondered on what I could do to have the peace and assurance of God's salvation. I believe the Lord led me to Romans 4:4-5 that reads, "Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. 5However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness." We had done Romans before in our ministry however this time around it took a personal meaning. This was about Abraham where the bible was teaching that, Abraham became the righteousness of God not because he was justified by works. But because he believed God. The word that came to me was, "...to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness." The Lord was saying to me personally that, all my good works and performance are but filthy rags for salvation. Like a little just who trusts their parents and who but can only receive and no sense of earning anything. The truth here was that, God justifies the ungodly. Seeing and accepting that there was nothing I could do to be godly before God, but that it was purely the work of God to make me righteous before him. I could have so much peace in my heart. I did not have to rely on my works or the burden of performance or sense of achievement to be right before God. All I had to do was to simply receive and accept what the Lord said and did for me through Jesus Christ. Jesus laid down his life on the cross so that I may be saved, it is the complete work of God. The amazing grace of God. This is how I can come to God like a little child and pray that God may use me to also share

this good news to others.

In conclusion, the salvation of a little child that dies is the great illustration of the sovereign grace of God. Because a little child has no contribution towards their salvation. This is the pattern or example for anyone who will be saved. In verse 16, Jesus illustrates the special place these little children have in God's kingdom, Jesus took them by his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. It did not matter what backgrounds they were coming from, whether parents are believers or not, if we but come like little children we too will enter the kingdom of God. Lord thank you for your amazing grace, please help us receive it and accept it like a little child. Amen.