

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. 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. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.—*Mark 10:13-16* (NIV2011)

### **Bring God’s Children to Jesus**

There was already a little bit of anxiety every time you went. There is so much you have to do just to leave the house! Then you get there, sit down, and you never knew what is going to happen. Some days it wasn’t so bad. They sat there, did their own thing, you are able to pay attention and get something out of it yourself. Others days though... And it just so happens to be one of those days. Things keep falling making way too much noise. You can see her turning around a few places ahead to catch a glimpse of what is going on. You know she’s just curious. But you can’t help but feel embarrassed. The child needs to get up for the bathroom. Now you endure more looks because the back spots were already full when you made it today. One child fusses because they are hungry. Another child makes it quite obvious they want to be somewhere else as their fussing and crying gets louder and louder. You could use a little extra support from their dad, but he is busy with seemingly more important things. You see the looks of, “My child would have known better than to act that way.” You’ve heard the comments, “Back in the day, you know, you learned to sit still and listen.” And you know they mean well. At the same time you can’t help but feel like you are a bad dad because your children are acting that way. You can’t help but feel like a failed mom because someone else happened to get your child to settle down. Oh, and that was just today. But as exhausting as it was, you know that you need to be there. As awkward as it could be, you believe, here, is where your child needs to be. As anxious as you might feel, you know it is worth it and you will do it again. You want to bring your children to be with Jesus, to hear His words, and to have Him bless them.

Whether that’s taking place in our church or that’s in Jesus’ day, it’s not a stretch of the imagination in either case. This wasn’t the first time these moms, parents, grandparents were bringing children to Jesus. This seems to be a rather common occurrence where infants, babies, all the way through high school age and early twenties (“children” in v.10 can refer to anyone who is not considered an adult) are being brought to Jesus to be touched and blessed by him.

But the disciples reach a breaking point. The people had taken time out of their day to be there—they want to respect their time. The people had come to listen to Jesus not to children fuss, whine, and complain they are bored. To a point, they were protecting

Jesus too. They knew his work was important. They knew his time was important. They knew that his message was one that people needed to hear. Isn't there a better place you could take the kids? There's important stuff to learn, people to heal, miracles to do!

Finally Jesus notices the commotion. As they saw that look in Jesus' eye, the disciples are thinking Jesus will finally say something and send these kids away. They couldn't be more mistaken. Out of all the things these disciples would do and say, getting in the way of people being with Jesus crosses the line. Jesus is not saying this with a comforting tone in his voice. He's not speaking to the parents to encourage them. He's getting after and angry—indignant—at his disciples. He's fed up with them. **“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”**

There's already such a mountain for the Gospel to climb when it comes to a child's sinful natures; but then we pile more on top of it. But it's not just the turning around in the seat, the questioning looks, or the comments that can get in the way. It's most certainly not only coming from other people. It starts in the home. So many want to blame the church and pastors when someone has fallen away (and it is especially heartbreaking and sad when that might be true). But don't sell yourself short! On average—unless you go to our Lutheran Grade School and have Catechism class—if you go to Bible Class, you spend two hours with the church a week. That is two out of the 168 total hours in a week; 120 minutes out of 10,080 in a week. That's shorter than many movies today. There's a reason why Paul tells fathers to first and foremost bring their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Notice, he doesn't mention anything about training them in a certain trade, field of work, to be a hard worker, or sport. He doesn't mention instructions for getting the most experiences in life. That all follows **after** the Lord. It starts in the home where dad and mom impress God's Word on their children's hearts and minds. It continues as you walk along the road and drive home from church. It keeps happening when you lie down and when you get up. We hinder children when the only time we speak of God's Word is when we are in church. You are putting obstacles in their way when coming to God's House or being in the Word is when you have nothing else planned, because you have to, or say so. You are piling on that mountain by your attitude when you are in church, how you talk about God's Word, how you live, act, and talk about other people.

This isn't just for parents with small children. Children are sponges soaking up everything around them. So this is you, older students—the little ones are looking at you and deciding how they will act when they are your age. Grandpa and Grandma—your grandchildren are learning from you. This is you, dear single person. The children see you, how you act, look up to you and are forming an idea how they will act in high school, college, and years afterward when it comes to church and God's Word. So much

can hinder children from being with Jesus. And when it's you or me, something we do or say that is getting in the way, Jesus is angry. Now don't think you can say, "Well, I'm not anyone they should look up to." You don't have a choice in it. They do look to you. And on top of that, you made the promise at that child's baptism. During that part in the service you promised to assist parents in whatever manner possible so that child may remain a child of God until death. God is serious about promises and one day you will have to give account.

Why? Because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Jesus came to live perfectly for them whose sinful nature is just as damning as your own. He came to hug and love the little ones who need so much love and patience. He came to suffer for sin so that they might know God as their perfect Father in heaven. He came to die so that they might be with him with eternal life as their own. That's why we baptize babies: God's kingdom belongs to them. That's why, we want children to be in this house next to grandpas and grandmas, single adults, mom and dads. It's so encouraging to overhear people reassure one another how good it is to have their children in church sitting in the pew with them and hear the commotion in the back. You recognize and believe Jesus' words: God's kingdom belongs to them. That's why, by God's grace, we have our Lutheran school and preschool which you support it with your dollars you put in the offering plates. That's why you take the time to send your prayers to God that he might bless the teachers, the students, and the ministry of our school. That's why you are willing to send money and prayers on behalf of Nebraska Lutheran High School. That's why we support the work of our synod so that God's Word and his kingdom continue to spread. Because Jesus says, "Let God's children come to me, and do not hinder them. For the kingdom of God belongs to them."

But why do stop there? Jesus doesn't. He's just getting started: "**Truly, unless you receive the kingdom of God like a child, you will certainly not enter it**" (v.15). Do you hinder yourself, dear child of God, from being with Jesus? It's bad enough that we get in the way of others being with Jesus with a poor attitude and sinfully misplaced priorities. Then we get in our own way and hinder ourselves from being with Jesus. Jesus tells you, receive God's kingdom like a child. A baby does not question mom when she rubs her back assuring she is safe. A young child doesn't doubt dad that it's going to be okay when he holds him in his arms and assures him. The faith of child simply believes and trusts. And that faith of a child isn't content with knowing just a little bit. It desires to grow. It wants to learn more. But then we get older. As we grow in wisdom and experience we grow in skepticism and doubt that God's promises are true. We grow in our cynical attitudes and snide comments of others and distrust in God's Word. We hold onto sins convincing ourselves that they aren't that bad or any worse than someone else. We grip tightly to how others have hurt us and the comments they

have made. We dwell on our failures of the past. We become lazy in our faith lives too busy with work and daily life to be in the Word or come to Bible Study because it's before church. You may feel like you aren't learned enough to study the Word on your own. You content yourself with, "Jesus loves me this I know, and that's all I need to know."

But Jesus tells you: receive God's kingdom like a child. And like a child we want to grow and learn more of God's kingdom and its rule in our lives. Jesus didn't come for just the little children. He takes on flesh and blood to be your brother and to bring you into his family. He lives in this world tempted as we are to help you back up when you have fallen again assuring you, "Your sins are forgiven." He suffers on the cross for when you have hindered yourself and others from being with him so that you would not suffer for eternity. He's abandoned by his Father so that you might be welcomed with open arms. He sheds his blood so that he mends your relationship with God and brings you to him.

Jesus tells you, "Get out of your own way. Do not hinder yourself. For the kingdom of God belongs to you." That's what he promises with water pouring on your head, the Word spoken in your ears and on your heart. Jesus brings you into his warm embrace with his nail-marked hands and declares you his own. God makes you his child and heir of his kingdom. It rules in your heart and is promised to you for eternity. Jesus wants you close to him. So he invites you to the Lord's Supper where he physically touches your hands and mouth with his body and blood given and poured out for you. Jesus draws you close to himself so he can whisper his sweet assurances in your ear that nothing in all of creation can take his kingdom from you or separate you from his love. And by Spirit-worked child-like faith we simply believe and trust this is most certainly true.

"Bring God's children to me," Jesus says to you. The single most important relationship in your life is your relationship with Jesus. It starts at home. It grows in church. It's fed with Word and Sacrament. Bring God's children to Jesus—that means you too. Amen.