

Title: Love The Little Children
Text: Mark 10:13-16
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Theme: Journey With Jesus

Introduction: Stewart Ruch shares about how every autumn his family likes to go apple picking.

Here's the *ideal* day of apple picking. The leaves are golden and rusty, the sky is beautiful, and it's 75 degrees. We all pile into the van and start singing and laughing as we merrily drive to the orchard. We arrive early in the morning with plenty of time to enjoy the orchard. Surprisingly, the folks at the apple orchard say, "Today apples are free for families." So our kids guzzle apple cider and stuff themselves with apple donuts—and they don't even get a sugar high! Finally, after a perfect day at the orchard, we drive home as our children keep saying, "Wow, thanks, Mom and Dad!"

But the *real* day often looks like this. It's a disaster from the start. We leave at least two hours late. The apple orchard closes at 5 P.M., we're leaving at 3 P.M., and it takes an hour-and-a-half to get there, but I bark at everyone, "We're going, so get in the car!" We missed lunch because we were scrambling to get everything done. With blood sugar levels plummeting, my wife and I start arguing. I think it's her fault that we're leaving late; she says it's my fault. We keep arguing until the kids interrupt because now they're arguing with each other. I turn around and snap at the kids, "Knock it off! I'm arguing with your mom."

When we pull into the apple orchard, we only have thirty minutes before closing time. So we tell the kids, "Hurry up, so you can have some fun." By this time of the day all the good apples are gone, and nothing is free. The entrance fee was outrageous because they know they can rip off suburban families who are trying to pretend they're in the country for the day. When we get the kids back in the van, it's already dark. On the way home, we finally get our apples: we stop at McDonald's for an apple turnover.

Unfortunately, family life and church life aren't always ideal. That's why we have to practice love, acceptance, and

forgiveness in the midst of real community among real fellow-sinners.

Today we start a new sermon series in the book of Mark. This “Journey with Jesus” can make a huge difference in our lives if we will let him speak to us. Today we will hear God challenge us to love, accept, and experience real community.

Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When 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. ¹⁵I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Don't you love the children? Now, I know that they can sometimes drive us absolutely crazy. Still, we love them... especially our own.

Because we love them, we want the best for them. And even people who are not Christians, or people who do not know about Christ, will say things like “we need to get the kids into church.” They know that many of the principles of Christianity are the kinds of principles that they want their kids to have.

I. People want to bring their children to Jesus.

In the ancient world, children had little status. Considered property, they were easily pushed aside. In fact, an unwanted child could literally be thrown away. But God works most powerfully in weakness. Those who are “like a little child” are most open to accepting God's reign. While some may consider children liabilities, Jesus stated that he reveals himself through the little ones in our midst. Children are to be at the center of his people's care and concern.

A. Thus the people wanted to bring their children to Jesus.

* When I was a child I remember my Dad taking us to the union hall or designated place every Christmas. The union bought a stage-load of presents and we were to receive a “free” gift. I remember going up to the stage and picking out a present.

There was no shame and no ill will. There were free gifts and my parents wanted us to be recipients.

- a. Jesus was doing some awesome things (healings and miracles) and parents didn’t want their children to miss out.
- b. Even if there are no presents, if we have the opportunity to get our children around somebody famous we do it.

* We are so busy in life trying to succeed, to make money, to provide for our own...even in the church. Thus we often ignore the children, brush them aside, or relegate them to someone else’s care at the other end of the building.

II. Church people don’t always understand why the children are to come.

* Jesus was often criticized for spending too much time with the wrong people—children, tax collectors, and sinners. Some, including the disciples, thought and think that Jesus should be spending more time with important leaders and the real church goers. But Jesus doesn’t care what we think about children. He is God, and he wants to speak to those who need him most.

A. The children have needs.

- a. We think that their needs are insignificant next to ours.
- b. How can a scraped knee or a sick puppy compare to a couple facing divorce or a husband that cannot pay his bills?

B. Jesus was indignant.

- a. This word “indignant” is a strong emotional reaction and is unique to Mark who highlighted Jesus’ emotions more than the other Gospel writers.
- b. Jesus’ sharp double command—Let, literally “start allowing” the little children come to Me, and do not hinder, literally “stop preventing”) them—was a rebuke to the disciples.

* When you read the scriptures where do you see Jesus expressing anger. The examples that pop into my head are in the temple when the “godly” leaders are taking advantage of the people and abusing the process that God has made available, and when he sees children being mistreated.

III. The Kingdom of God is given to the children.

A. Why?

- a. A child is receptive and trustful.
- b. A child has the capacity to act at once upon what he understands.

* We live in a technological age. Some of us however, are technologically challenged. I know of adults who still use a typewriter because they don’t even want to know how to turn on a computer. (And some still use a pencil and paper.)

Have you noticed that our children grasp the significance of the TV controller and DVD remote much more quickly than we do?

B. Jesus welcomed the children.

- a. Because the kingdom of God, God’s present spiritual rule in people’s lives, belongs as a possession to such as these.
- b. All, including children, who come to Jesus in childlike trust and dependence, are given free access to Jesus.

IV. Adults are to learn the lesson the children are teaching us.

A. The Kingdom of God belongs to such as have the qualities of children.

Matthew 18:3

And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

- a. We cannot experience the Kingdom without faith.
- b. No one can earn the kingdom.
- c. We can only receive it through grace.

Matthew 25:34

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

B. Learn from the children.

Mark 9:36-37

He took a little child and had him stand among them.

Taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷"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."

IV. When the children make it to Jesus, he blesses them.

A. Jesus wanted to show the crowd how strongly he felt about this.

- a. He took the children up in his arms.
- b. He blesses them fervently.
- c. Freely given to those who receive it trustingly.

B. What does this blessing mean?

- a. It emphasizes the warmhearted passion with which Jesus blessed each child who came to Him.
- b. It was a great moment for both parent and child.

Conclusion: Think of your favorite food. Steak perhaps. Or fajitas. Or ice cream. Or homemade apple pie. God could have just made fuel. He could have made us to be sustained by some kind of savory biscuit. Instead he gave a vast and wonderful array of foods.

Food is a central experience of God's goodness The world is more delicious than it needs to be. We have a super-abundance of divine goodness, generosity, and blessing. God went over the top. We don't need the variety we enjoy, but he gave it to us out of sheer exuberant joy and grace.

Many of our children have learned to accept it. Have you?