

THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

Jesus Loves the Children; So Should We

Matthew 18:1-14

How many of you remember the song *Jesus Loves the Little Children* from years back? Do you remember singing it to your children, or your grandchildren, or singing it as a child yourself?

The message of this childhood favorite is simple but profound. Jesus really did and does love the children, and therefore, so should we.

If we are to have a Christ-Centered life, we should love what and whom Christ loved!

In our study through the gospels to help each of us grow in having a truly Christ-Centered life, today we are going to pause at Mt. 18. Jesus and His disciples have gone back to Capernaum in Galilee, a city in which Jesus ministered often.

Interestingly, it was the fall of the year, October to be precise, just before the Feast of Tabernacles. If it were an average day, the morning would have been cool, but not cold, and the rainy season still a few weeks away.

The disciples liked to prod each other with conversation about which of them would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. On this particular morning, they tried to get Jesus to join their discussion.

As He usually did, the Master surprised them. Let's read Mathew's account of what happened.

Matthew 18:1–5 NKJV 1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

Why did Jesus love the children so much? Why did they hold a special place in the Savior's heart?

JESUS LOVED THE CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY EXEMPLIFY WHAT A CHILD OF GOD SHOULD BE LIKE.

- **Humble**, unpretentious, **real**, transparent –
 - This is what Jesus wants from us all. Pastor, Staff Members, Deacons, LCG Leaders, members, attenders.

- The very beginning of a relationship with Jesus begins with honesty about who we are and where we are and how we are.
- The growth of every relationship with Jesus progresses only at those points when we humble ourselves, and put away the pretense. We cannot fool Him! He knows every action, thought, motive, and He never forgets! Sometimes we lie to ourselves and in time convince ourselves the lie is true.
- **Become as little children** – What did Jesus mean by that?
 - Compare Scripture with Scripture.
 - In this case, we have a passage in Luke where Jesus again is using a child as an example.

Luke 18:15–17 NKJV 15 Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to Him and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not **receive the kingdom of God as a little child** will by no means enter it.”

- **With simple faith of a child.**
- Faith means trusting.
- Who is more trusting than a little child?
- They will let you throw them up in the air and never worry about being caught.
- And they will beg you to do it over and over again.
- We often think we need to get children to where they can understand like an adult.
- Jesus tells us the opposite is true. We need adults and teens who will trust in Christ like a child.

Let me ask you even as I ask myself ...

- Does Jesus see these noble childlike qualities in you?
- Do you come to Him in honesty and transparency, humble and not pretending?
- Do you respond to Jesus in faith, fully trusting in Him to keep His word and His promises to you?
- That is what Jesus wants from us.
- That is where the blessing is!

JESUS SHOWED HIS GREAT LOVE FOR CHILDREN BY HIS PROTECTIVENESS OF THEM.

Matthew 18:6–9 NKJV 6 **“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.** 7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

8 “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.

9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

- **Jesus said that great consequences await those who lead children to sin against God.**
 - What happens if you have a millstone hung around your neck and you are cast into the depths of the sea? You die a horrifying death!
 - Jesus says, “Woe to the person who does this!”
 - Woe to the person who convinces children that they are not created by God but evolved by chance over millions of years.
 - Woe to those who lead our young ones into drugs or pornography.
 - Woe to people who create gender confusion in children and young teens, telling them they can be whatever gender they want to be, or none at all, or both at once, or back and forth. Woe to those who lead God’s little ones, created in His image, male and female, lead them astray and into sin with such lies.
 - Woe to those who would draw our children into homosexuality.
 - Woe to those who tell children that marriage is a loving relationship between any two people, not just between one man and one woman for life as God defines it to be.
 - Listen, my friend, this declaration comes not from the lips of a homophobic fundamentalist preacher.
 - These are the words of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who one day will sit in judgment over each and every one who has ever been born!
 - It is He who is both the creator and ruler of this universe who says
 - ❖ You are better off dead than to lead one of these little ones to sin.

- ❖ Those who would so cause these little ones to turn away from God are themselves lost without God and will be cast into the everlasting fire.

And then Jesus tells us that God the Father so shares the sentiment of God the Son that He has assigned an angel to watch over each little child who is born.

Matthew 18:10 NKJV “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven **their angels** always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

It is from these words of Jesus that we get the true doctrine of the guardian angel, an angel who is assigned to a child upon their creation.

Jesus also makes clear what is God the Father’s will for every single child He causes to be conceived in the womb.

Matthew 18:14 NKJV Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Do not try to convince me that the Almighty in His sovereignty chose before time began for certain people to be saved and certain people to be eternally lost and suffer forever in the flames of the Lake of Fire.

For my Lord Jesus Christ, who knows the Father from eternity past, and is Himself One with the Father declares, “it is NOT THE WILL OF GOD THE FATHER that one of these little ones should perish.”

And so my friend, as God the Father loves the children, ...

As God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ loves the children,...

If we are to be like Jesus,

If we are to have Jesus-centered, Christ-centered lives,

... we too must love the children.

I am so glad that as part of our Center of Hope ministries, we have A Sheltering Tree, a pregnancy help center. Tomorrow is the 20th Anniversary of saving babies and mothers!

- **We must teach them the truth from the Word of God**, rather than the fleeting philosophies of men.
- **We must introduce them to Jesus, who loves them with an everlasting love, so much, as to die for their sins upon the cross.**
- **We must tell them how their Savior defeated death by rising from the dead.**

- **We must share with them the gospel so that they can be forgiven of their own sin and receive the gift of eternal life by trusting in Christ as their own Lord and Savior.**
- **We must teach them how to walk with Christ and live in joyous fellowship with Him.**

These things we do every Sunday morning and Wednesday night in our Kid Zone. But we need to do it personally with those children around us, our own children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, our neighbors.

Jesus loves the little children,

So we should love them too.

- Will you stand before Jesus today as a little child? Humble, transparent, honest, without pretending. Repent of sin. Trust Him.
- Will you ask Jesus to help you love what and who He loves. No matter how much you love children, a lot or not so much, would you ask Jesus to help you love them more just because He does?