



**“...like a child.”**

**Mark 10:13-31**

**by Pastor Tim Dodson  
at JF Believers Church  
in Menomonie, Wisc  
on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**Mark 10:13-31** Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for

of such is the kingdom of God. 15 "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them. 17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" 18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" 20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." 21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." 22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" 27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." 28 Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." 29 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 30 "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 "But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

In our last message, we dealt with the issues of marriage and divorce, but we did so...*as Jesus did*, handled the subject within the realms of consistency, covenant commitment, and faithfulness. I mentioned how the lack of these personal traits in one's life affects the areas of marriage, friendship, vocation and church. Jesus consistently spoke of "life in the kingdom" and what such was to look like and BE like for those of us who say we belong to Christ. So if the previous subject matters that were front and center were the "how-not-to-do-it," then we are left to ask the question... "*How DO we live out a dynamic and faithful life in the kingdom of God?*" Repeatedly we see that the scriptures are not a jumbled ad hoc bunch of disjointed stories, but are often a linear event with connected subject matters. We often see a concept presented and then a "if such is the case, then our answer is...", with then stated goals and a supreme position for which to seek out and live. So moving onward in the story line, we see Jesus...*having presented the negative life scenario*, now present the illusive answer to a lifestyle that will achieve the kingdom peace that Christ sought for us to live. *How do we live out a dynamic and faithful life in the kingdom of God? By receiving that kingdom like a child...*

What does that mean? Well firstly, Jesus doesn't say we should *be* children or even *act* like children, but rather *receive the kingdom like children*. We are not being called to begin playing with toys again and throwing our food, but the *heart* of a child on our approach to the kingdom is the key! He is not suggesting that all professionalism and adult behavior be traded for the life of playground imaginations, but unless we understand what He is getting at, we stand in danger of not ever receiving the gift and position of Kingdom living.

Indeed children have a simplicity and faith that is so rarely found in adults. Children do not refuse gifts, they trust those around them that love them, they embrace life, and find joy in the simplest of pleasures. They approach the throne of grace in humility and awe, because they know they are just a “little person.” Please note also, that Jesus took the children, placed His hands on them, and *blessed* them. He didn’t *baptize* them, He *blessed* them.

The apostles, *as often was the case*, thought that Jesus needed their help and attempted to become presidential secret service men to keep Jesus safe and on schedule. However, Jesus wasn’t having any of that. He was seemingly always available...some perhaps think too much so, as scripture records on more than one occasion that he was extremely tired and sought some time to rest...*and then often didn’t get it*, because the people kept coming. So I wouldn’t be too hard on the apostles: they no doubt had good intentions although such was misguided for sure. In this case, He wanted the children to be able to come to Him, and was “greatly displeased” that His boys were trying to keep them away. I guess misery loves company because I find a strange personal relief that I am not the only full time servant of the Lord that has “greatly displeased” Him!

What does it mean to receive the kingdom of heaven as a child? This is no mystery to me, for I think that in many things my approach is still that of a child. I am easily amazed at creation and so easily lost in the beauty and the magnitude of God and His relationship with us. The world is full of “shiny objects” for me to get distracted by, and life is even yet full of experiences and witnesses that seem to be new and “first time,” even though at my age they are anything but.

Imagine for a moment the scene of giving a child a cookie. No questions are raised, no explanation is required. They do not ask what kind of cookie it is, or who made it, or why are you giving it to them. You are giving a cookie and they are going to eat it without question. A child will not save that cookie for later, nor will they strategize to eat half now and half on a future “yet-to-be-determined” timeframe. Nope. They take the cookie and put it in their mouth and eat it all like it is the first time they ever ate a cookie and it could be the last one they ever eat so...*Is that your kingdom experience?*

Is it not a fact that a child will go completely out of his or her way in order to step into the one and only puddle of water, which could actually be avoided by a blind man? Why? To experience it. To embrace and know the simple joy of jumping in and spraying water high. *Is that your kingdom experience?*

There is no fear in that moment, and there is complete trust. The kind that causes a child to jump from several steps up...arms open wide...into the arms of their Father, without a thought that if He doesn’t catch me the whole scene could get rather dramatic in a hurry! No...it will be ok, because my dad will of course catch me.

The first thing we notice is that Jesus speaks of *receiving* the kingdom of God—not our *achieving* the kingdom, or *creating* the kingdom here on earth by our voting or our political efforts. He doesn’t speak concerning our works or our earning it or deserving it. In fact, He doesn’t speak of us exercising any kind of effort to enter the kingdom of God at all. Certainly it is a fact that God desires to use His people to grow and advance His kingdom. “This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (Matt. 24:14). The church participates in the making of disciples by preaching the gospel, baptizing believers, and teaching them all that Christ has commanded (28:18–20). Yet the kingdom of God is not something that we in any way make happen. It is clearly a gift. Something that has been given to humanity because of God’s great love for His creation ([John 3:16](#)). We do not seek out or work towards that kingdom; rather, the kingdom comes to us in the form of a free and unearned gift.

If this is all true, how do we rectify the passage of Luke 13:24 that says...*in a seeming contradiction*, that we are to "*Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*" Let's go back to the child and the cookie scenario: If I hold up the cookie gift in front of the child...an unmerited, unprovoked, and unexpected gift, the child still must *want* the cookie and reach out and accept the free gift being offered. This passage is not some hyper-Calvinistic position where God not only *chose* you but essentially *forced* you into a relationship with him. We still have free will...we still can refuse the cookie. But the cookie being offered...the cookie we take and freely enjoy, is still free, and unearned and simply an act of God's grace and love.

Our faith is not something we earn or work up in ourselves. Indeed we must actively trust in Christ, yet our coming to the Savior is with empty hands. We come admitting that we have nothing to give to God but that we depend fully and completely on His unmerited favor, and further that we desire that relationship. We open our empty hands of faith to receive God's promised blessing. In other words, we want the cookie being offered and we receive it with joy!

Again, let us not place a lengthy period between verses 16 and verse 17. His life was a seamless example...a "one man play" acted out on the stage of life. The first act leading to the second act and so on. So bearing in mind the discussion on marriage and divorce...complete with life corrections on commitment and faithfulness, He went on to tell us how it ought to be done...the approach and receptivity of a child, and now will paint a picture of the difference between the two live and approaches.

In verse 17 and on, Jesus now is going to drive home His message with this fella that has now entered the scene from stage left. The man begins his contact with Jesus with a question...something that is often the case even today, and with a question that is on the lips and the hearts of most of humanity: "*What do I have to do to go to heaven?*"

### **10:17-18**

Jesus isn't saying that He isn't *good*, but He is saying that to accept Him *as good* is to accept Him as *God*.

The vast population today wants to receive Christ as good. They just don't want to accept Him as *God*.

This man looked to Jesus as the one who could tell him *how* to achieve eternal life, but not as the one who could actually *give* it to him!

### **10:17-18, Cont'd**

**Rom 6:23** "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

**1 John 5:11-12** "*And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not*