

## Matthew 18:1-14 ESV

## Young Children

What did Jesus say about them?

How should we respond to them?

Sunday, Sept. 7 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, Sept. 8 at 7 PM

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost / 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity – 2014

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: Think about *an infant* or *a very young child* in comparison to us. **They** are ♦small, ♦weak, and ♦lacking knowledge; **we** are ♦bigger, ♦stronger, and ♦know so much more! So who is greater in this world? We are! But who is greater in God's kingdom? Not the proud, *but those who are humble – like little children!* Now, may God help us to *rightly understand* and *apply* His Word.

1. **Young Children – They are Examples for Adults (1-5):**

- a. <sup>1</sup> **At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”** // Since they *were becoming proud*, they probably wanted to know *which one of them* Jesus would identify as the greatest, but – *to give the appearance of being humble* – they asked the question in a general way.
- b. <sup>2</sup> **And calling to him a child,<sup>1</sup> he put him in the midst of them<sup>3</sup> and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.** // So Jesus' disciples *thought* they were either the

<sup>1</sup> παιδίον: Matt. 2:9 – the infant Jesus; Mark 5:40 – a 12-year-old girl; Luke 1:59 – John the Baptist when he was eight days old).

*greatest or moving in that direction*, but Jesus basically said: If you don't stop going in your present direction, *you will have no part in the kingdom of heaven!* As Jesus was calling them to repent – *to turn*, how is Jesus calling us to repent – *to change* in our own lives? *Let us pray...*

- c. <sup>4</sup> **Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”** // Dr. Kretzmann wrote: **“There must be no considering of honor and glory before men, no false ambition, no scheming for power...”** (97) Our part is to humble ourselves; God's part is to exalt us *when and how He chooses*.
- d. <sup>5</sup> **“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me...”** // With those words Jesus identified Himself with young children: As they *humbly trust in the Lord*, so Jesus *humbly trusted in His heavenly Father*. Let us do the same!

2. **Adults – They Must Not Lead Young Children Into Sin**

**(6-9):** So what are some ways we could lead young children into sin? **(1)** By teaching them what is false, for example, that: •evolution **is** true, •the Bible **is not** God's Word, or •doing good **is** the way to heaven! *So it is important for us to know the Bible!* **(2)** By living in sin! Why? Children learn more by what we do than by what we say! *So it is important to live in repentance!* Now we consider some shocking examples:

- a. It would be better to drown: <sup>6</sup> **“...but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a**

great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” // So there are two possible actions: (1) I could lead a *little one* into sin **OR** (2) someone could attach a stone weighing hundreds of pounds to my neck, then through me into Lake Erie. Even though I may be led to choose option (1), *the outcome may be eternal punishment*, so option (2) is better!

<sup>7</sup> “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! // “Woe” is an expression of grief, so not something we want! *But grief will come to the person through whom the temptation comes!*

- b. It would be better to lose a body part: <sup>8</sup> **And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. [Why?] It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. <sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. [Why?] It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.”** // Can you imagine being without a hand, foot, or eye? That would be better than sinning *without repentance* and being thrown into hell!

### 3. **Adults – They Should Know How Much God Loves Young Children (10-14):**

- a. They have guardian angels: <sup>10</sup> **“See that you do not despise [look down on] one of these little ones**

*[who believe in me]*. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.”<sup>2</sup> // So the “little ones” look insignificant to us, *but they are very important to God!*

- b. Every single one is valuable: <sup>12</sup> **“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? <sup>13</sup> And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. <sup>14</sup> So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones [who believe in me] should perish.”** // So can we rightly reason that a particular little one is not important to his Heavenly Father? *By no means!* Some little ones may feel forgotten, but let us teach them that God **+**made them, **+**loves them, **+**saved them, and **+**provides for them!

**Conclusion:** So, *by God’s grace*, let us **♦**be humble, **♦**be sorry for our sins, **♦**trust in Jesus as our Savior, and **♦**bless little children by *teaching them the truth and living according to it!*

And all God’s people said: **Amen!**

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<sup>2</sup> This note is in the ESV Bible regarding verse 11, which is not included above: Some manuscripts add verse 11: *For the Son of Man came to save the lost.*