**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 3-13-2022  
Jesus Blesses the Children**

Friends, do you know that there is a lot of power in blessing others? But it has, in my opinion, become something of a lost art in recent years. Blessing others was a big deal in the days that the Scriptures were being written. And it should still be a big deal today.

I would like to share two stories that are very meaningful to me when it comes to the power of blessing.

The first one is very personal as well. I graduated from high school in the year 2000 and attended nearby Messiah College beginning in the fall of that year.

And I remember that the day in which I left home for college, my dad gave me a note. It was a blessing, an exhortation, and encouraging words.

And I still have the note to this day. I keep it in our safe, but I still take it out from time to time to re-read it.

In fact, here it is. I’m not going to read it, but the fact that I have it easily acceptable 22 years later testifies to the power of blessing.

The other story was from something I heard on the radio recently. I believe that it was through a brief message by a Christian leader named Max Lucado.

And in this radio broadcast, Max shared a story about a teacher that had their class write something that they like about each of their classmates. What resulted was a large number of slips of paper with kind and encouraging words that each student received. I would consider these blessings as well.

It was back in the mid-20th century when this teacher had their class do this exercise of blessing one another. Years then pass and a young man who was a student in that class was serving this country during the war in Vietnam and sadly he is killed in Vietnam.

But guess what they found in his clothing? They found that he was carrying around a number of these notes, these blessings, even several years after he was given them by his classmates.

Truly, friends, there is so much power in blessing others!

\*\*As I mentioned earlier, in the days that Scripture was being written, offering intentional blessings towards others was a very important concept. The Bible is full of stories where one person blessed another:

We think of Abraham blessing Isaac and Isaac blessing Jacob and then Jacob blessing his children. We read of the priestly blessing found in Numbers chapter 6, where the priests were to bless the Israelites with this beautiful blessing that goes:

**“The Lord bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn His face toward you and give you peace.”**

From these and numerous other passages from Scripture, the concept of intentionally blessing others is shown to be a very important one to God and to His people.

\*Then, when God came to dwell amongst humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ, it is not surprising that He taught about the importance of blessing.

What was surprising, however, was the extent that Jesus wanted His followers to bless. It surprised even those who valued the giving of blessing.

Jesus instructed His followers to so value blessing that they were to even bless those that curse them. These were striking and surprising words to his hearers.

The fact is that as much as the people of Israel valued blessing, they largely also put limits on who was to be the recipients of blessing. Certainly not those that curse them or non-Jewish people, or lepers or others of little to no value in society.

One of the surprising examples of Jesus blessing others was the fact that He blessed little children.

We find that account in **Mark 10:13-16**

**13People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on 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. 15Truly I tell you, 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, placed his hands on them and blessed them.**

Friends, this is a fascinating story. Parents were bringing their little children towards Jesus in order for Him to lay His hands on them. This laying on of hands would be the physical act that would accompany spoken words of blessing. They went together. This is still pretty common today that speaking blessing and laying on of hands go together.

But before these families make their way fully to Jesus they are intercepted by Jesus’ disciples. In his commentary on Mark’s Gospel, David E. Garland describes the disciples acting like hostile bouncers. That is quite an image to picture of these men who would soon become some of the leaders of the early church.

But why did they do this? Why would they try to shoo away these families and their children?

The reason is that they did not think that it would be important to Jesus. Jesus has enough important things to do than to waste His precious time on a bunch of kids, in their opinion.

An important thing to remember about this powerful story is that children at that time had essentially no status in society. Children could be ignored very easily with nothing thought of it.

And the disciples, who saw themselves as important gatekeepers to Jesus, were showing by their actions that they didn’t see Jesus blessing these children as the best use of Jesus’ time.

But despite knowing their cultural realities, the parents of these children still saw Jesus as approachable. After they are initially turned away, however, Jesus quickly responds in an affirming way.

But regarding the disciples, Mark writes that Jesus was **indignant**. Some synonyms for indignant are the following:

Irate, vexed, outraged, incensed, an annoyed.

Evidently, Jesus’ emotions and tone of voice made it quite clear to His disciples that He was not happy about how they handled this opportunity.

Jesus’ indignation made it crystal clear that He was not too busy to take time to bless children. In the eyes of Jesus, these children were of great significance.

Jesus tells His disciples,**“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.**

From these words of Jesus, our Lord makes it very clear that He welcomes children and sees them as valuable. The message was clear - Don’t mess with the kids, they are important to Me.

Jesus does not stop there, however. He takes this discussion to another level as He says **for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**

Now what does this mean? Why does the kingdom of God belong to those that are children or like children?

Is it that children are inherently good? I don’t think so.

While there is an innocence often associated with children, the truth is that children can also be very selfish and short-tempered and stubborn. Maybe you can vouch for that. We call that childishness. And Jesus certainly would not be endorsing childishness as necessary to enter the kingdom of God.

So what is Jesus getting at here? What is it about children and those that are like children that Jesus is saying is so important that one must have if they are to enter of the kingdom of God?

I believe that it is because children and childlike people are those that recognize their own littleness. Children know their needy. Children are dependent on others. They can’t hop in a car and drive off if they want.

This means that they know they need help, they know that on their own they cannot make it, they need grace. And children are able to receive easily, without feeling like they need to earn everything.

Can you see how this connects to Jesus saying that “**The kingdom of God belongs to such as these**.”? These things are very important when it comes to responding to the good news of Jesus.

In fact, Jesus goes on to say **Truly I tell you.**

And whenever Jesus says “Truly I tell you” or “verily, I say unto you” – as some translations say, that means (get ready, because I am about to say something very important that you best take to heart).

And Jesus does that here. Jesus says, **truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**

That is quite a statement from our Lord. To enter the kingdom of God, to be born again, one must receive the free gift of God’s grace offered to them in Jesus.

Every man-made religion is all about what people can do to try to earn their right standing before some type of higher power.

But Christianity is different. Christianity says that this is impossible. Our Lord teaches that it is all about receiving His grace and mercy by faith. We need to be childlike to do this. It is by grace that we are saved, through faith, which is a gift of God.

Finally, friends, there is this beautiful conclusion to the scene. And you can probably picture it in your mind as you hear it again. Mark writes that **he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.**

To take someone in one’s arms is a picture of comfort and love and kindness and gentleness. Think about how people today hold infants or young children.

And then Jesus places His hands on them and blesses them as he speaks truth and love over them.

Sisters and brothers, as we ponder this story from the gospels, what things does God want us to take away for our lives today?

**I believe that it is to remember that God cares about blessing and so should we.**

While some of us have been blessed more by other people more than others, Jesus invites each of us to come before His throne as a child, seeking His blessing. Even though He is not physically with us today, we can come before Him in prayer and He will bless us.

This is equally true with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

I have a powerful blessing called The Father’s Love Letter. There is a story behind this letter, which I would be happy to share with you, but today I would like to speak this over you as a blessing from our Heavenly Father. We will have copies of this available in our lobby as well for you to take with you for yourselves or others.   
  
(Receive this is a blessing from our Heavenly Father)

\*Read The Father’s Love Letter

Finally, friends, let us be blessers of others in the Name of Jesus. All people are valuable and precious, the teacher I spoke about earlier knew this truth. May we as Christians and as a church together seek to bless others in Jesus’ Name – with no exceptions.

Let us pray…

Resources:

David E. Garland – Gospel of Mark commentary

<https://www.fathersloveletter.com/text.html>

<https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Blessing-Others>

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)