

## **Mark 10:13-16 Bring the children to Jesus! Pentecost 20 October 11, 2015**

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Unlimited grace and perfect peace from God our Father are ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. God's Word to keep us mindful of the many people who need to hear of Christ is written in Mark 10:13-16 These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Set us apart as Your messengers of truth. Your Word is truth!

Dear Christian Friends,

Sometimes we hear of an amber alert. A child is missing and in danger, so law enforcement wants people to watch. Sometimes on the national news we hear of a child lost in a forest. Search parties are formed to find the lost child before he or she dies of exposure or from a wild animal. Young children seem so vulnerable in our world. Some are exploited and harmed. Others lose parents and become orphans like in the country of India. There are even worse situations for many millions of children in the world, and not just young children. God considers all people to be His children by creation. But, too many are living without God as their heavenly Father and Jesus to save them from being eternally lost. No wonder that Jesus said in our verses, "*Let the little children come to Me!*" It should be our prayer every day, Lord, help us to:

### **Bring the children to Jesus!**

**First, we are to care about those who need Jesus.** We read in v. 13, "*People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.*" These adults showed love for their children by wanting a special blessing from Jesus. But the disciples wouldn't allow them to get close. They may have thought that Jesus needed rest or that He was too busy for children. But, they were wrong!

Jesus was indignant when He saw His disciples keeping the children from Him. Why was He so angry? Jesus loved these children just as He loves all people at any age. He knew that people needed Him. Psalm 51:5 states, "*I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*" Paul wrote, "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" (Romans 3:23) This "all" includes children! Jesus had said earlier, "*Flesh gives birth to flesh.*" (John 3:6) Children are sinful. They need Christ's forgiveness.

We feel terrible when we hear of a child getting lost. People pray that he or she will be found. How much worse we should feel about one spiritually lost. We need to ask ourselves if we are ever standing in the way of people getting help from Jesus? If we are not committed to outreach: not praying for those lost whether near or far or if we are not supporting the work of missions, in a sense we are keeping people from Jesus' blessing. In the recent Thoughts of Faith periodical, a pastor from Latvia, which is mostly an atheistic country lamented that without more funding their small church body is struggling to survive. Instead having more time to seek the lost, several pastors have cut back on ministry for full time secular employment. Also, their seminary is closed due to money shortages. We should be praying that God would provide for Latvia.

Sometimes the priorities of our congregation are only focused internally and not on outreach to unbelievers. But Jesus reminds us, "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*" (Matthew 9:37-38) He also said, "*As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.*" (John 9:4) Only God knows when it's a person's last chance to hear that Christ died for him or her. Life is short. "Let the children come to Jesus!"

The disciples seemed content to remain with only a little knowledge of Christ, but we must have spiritual growth in our faith and in the knowledge of God's Word or we will become the lost. It isn't enough to say, "I learned it all in confirmation class" or "What I learned from God's Word does not apply to my sinful way of life." We need a solid foundation in God's Word and the power of Christ in the Lord's Supper if we are to keep out of danger and so we have courage to warn others.

Our country has serious problems. We hear of many troubling events: mass shootings at schools, terrible things done to innocent children, and too many leaders who call evil “good.” Rather than to throw our arms up in anger or hang our arms down in despair, we should be in constant prayer to God. Jesus has called us to be lights with His Word for the world. Rather than be afraid, we can pray that God’s will be done for the lost! Jesus told believers to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.

**Second, Jesus wants to bless all people through us!** Jesus said, *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. (v.14)* Sinful children are not going to come to Jesus on their own. They need to be brought to Him just like the people who brought the children to Jesus at His time. So today, we in this congregation are to be constantly looking for more lost children and adults. We were blessed by Jesus through baptism, Sunday School, Bible class, a Christian day school, and in worship services. Now we have the opportunity to let our church bless others who need Jesus.

Jesus wants us to support the work of missions. Our ELS budget helps to support 20 orphanages and over 300 children in India. All those children have been baptized. Most are now attending Christian schools. Normally because of the strong Hindu influence, the Indian government would not allow Christians to do such work. But, thankfully the government doesn’t consider children to be that important. If only they knew what a blessing those children will become! In Peru we have several schools and humanitarian work to reach the children and Chile we have instruction classes in English. The book they read is the Bible! We also have a growing number of churches in the jungles of Peru with schools to train the children to turn to Christ instead of to witch doctors that practice their evil arts. Through our offerings we support outreach in South Korea where after 10 years the church has over 300 members and it is sponsoring 70 Korean teens to attend our Lutheran high schools in America. This same church has set up a seminary to train future pastors to go into new areas where Koreans live. In former atheistic countries like the Czech Republic the missionaries find it difficult to work with adults, but our school is reaching 250 students each year with the Gospel. Children are baptized each year and are leading their parents to hear Jesus and be blessed!

Jesus said about the children, *“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”* What did Jesus mean by this? Adults need the faith of a child which is a humble unquestioning trust in God’s promises to save them. God’s Word promises: *“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”* (Mark 16:16) *“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16). *[Jesus] took the children in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.”* (v.16) Can we be certain Jesus’ blessing as valid? After blessing the children with His hands, He allowed them to be chained and then nailed to a cross, where in death His hands extended forgiveness and life to all. By faith in the completed sacrifice of Christ, we can say: “Jesus has saved us! We will live forever with Him!” We can call on Him in prayer knowing that *“nothing is impossible for God.”* (Luke 1:37) That is the good news that keeps our faith alive and moves us as Christians to pray for the lost and share the news of Christ just like Miss Heller is doing as she teaches in China.

In our culture, when a missing child is found to be safe, the good news quickly spreads! How much more heaven rejoices, when the Holy Spirit uses our words about Jesus, our offerings of support, and our prayers, to bring little children and adults to Jesus. We thank God for His blessings of grace to us who were once lost but now are found in Jesus! May Christ’s love keep us looking and praying to bring more children to Him wherever they may be! Amen.