TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Bobby Rader

#144 O, Worship the King
Welcome by: Bobby Rader
Opening Prayer by: Don Lynn
#162 All Hail the Power of Jesus Name

Scripture Reading by: Parker Balch
#332 Lead Me to Calvary

Communion Devotional by: Jerry Mallernee
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#286 Wonderful Story of Love
Sermon: "Put the Devil to Flight"
Psalm 107:1-3

#903 There Is Power in the Blood
#867 To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way
Closing Prayer by: Walden David

Robert Ward's small group will meet today at 5:00 p.m. at the building

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Feb. 23, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Let The Children Come to Me

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. **(Mark 10:13-16)**

One of the first songs most of us learn as children, in Bible class or VBS or the like, is "Jesus Loves the Little Children." Every person reading this knows the words. This text is a reminder of just how true that song is. Jesus does, indeed, love the little children of the world.

Unfortunately, many people do not share Jesus' perspective. We see that in our modern world in various ways. We think of death in childhood as largely a relic of history with the exception of a few tragic cases. But according to the World Health Organization, about 7.5 million children die annually, and most of those are from preventable or treatable causes: diarrhea, respiratory infections, and common diseases. Those mortality numbers are much higher in 3rd world nations, of course. But even here in America, there are issues for living children. About 1 out of 6 children in the US live in poverty; 2.5 million experience homelessness in a given year. Child abuse reports involve over 7 million children annually. The vast majority of that is categorized as neglect: inadequate nutrition, hygiene, clothing, and abandonment. Many of those children end up in foster care. And, of course, the outcomes for abused and neglected children are terrible. They disproportionately display mental illness, criminal activity, and become abusers too.

We could multiply those sorts of depressing numbers. But even they pale in comparison to the first century world. For instance, a letter written by a man named Hilarion—which ironically means "cheerful"—to his pregnant wife, June 17, 1 BC, instructs her *if it is a male child let it live; if it is female, cast it out*. The Roman practice of killing babies by exposure, placing those who were unwanted on trash heaps to die, was common and persisted well beyond Jesus' day. If someone came along who wanted the child, they could pick them up—usually to eventually become prostitutes, gladiators, or slaves. Roman law gave fathers *patria potestas*, the absolute power, even of life and death, over their families. As late as AD 60, a son could be executed simply on the orders of his father.

Jewish culture treated children far better than that; infanticide was unthinkable. And the OT speaks frequently about children as a gift from God. Yet, practically, they were considered more of a burden than a blessing; they were viewed as completely insignificant, lowly, and with no status whatsoever.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Staci Lunceford Copeland has been placed on hospice.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas, Debbie Lynn, George Votaw

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Feb. 24th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Blood Drive on Monday, March 3rd from 4-7:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, March 4th at 8:00 a.m.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Andre Jones and his family on the passing of his son, Andre Jones, Jr. He passed away last week and the funeral arrangements are pending.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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All that helps us understand the reaction of the disciples in the text above, which might strike us as odd. Mark does not say who "they" were, bringing children to Jesus—presumably, the parents. And we do not know how old these children were. The word used here is the same used of the 12 year old girl in **Mk 5:39**. But many of them must have been quite young to take them in his arms; Luke's parallel account actually uses the word "babies." In any case, we can pretty easily visualize the scene: cheerful families standing around, perhaps in a line, chatting; some holding babies in their arms, older children running around playing.

But it comes to a screeching halt when the disciples rebuke them. Why would they do that? They were protecting Jesus. He was a busy and important man! There was the constant conflict with the religious establishment, casting out demons, dealing with crowds. And now here are these families bringing their children—just one more drain on his time, and a ridiculous one at that. These are only children—they have no social status, remember. The disciples have repeatedly demonstrated how proud and exclusive they are. They have tried to stop an unknown man from casting out demons in Jesus' name. They have argued about who is the greatest among them. And now here they are, throwing their weight around like Jesus' handlers, acting as gatekeepers. "The Master is a busy man! Get out of here, and take your stroller with you!"

But Jesus will have none of that. He is *indignant.* That's the only time this word is used in all of the NT; it literally it means "much grieved." That's a strong reaction—he is hot—and it is telling. You see, the things that grieve us or make us indignant reveal a lot about our character. That emotion alone indicates his concern for children. It is reinforced by his words: *let the children come to me and do not hinder them.* This is a remarkable statement for a Jewish rabbi in particular to make. The common view was that a sage should not bother with children. But Jesus welcomed them. From his reaction, we learn that children are worth his time; they are important.

Jesus truly was a lover of children. And that tells us that we need to be concerned about them too. Are we like Jesus? Or are we more like the disciples who have no time for babysitting? We recently put out a call for Bible class teachers. When we had a meeting about this a bit over a year ago, several indicated their willingness to serve; when it comes time to actually commit to doing it, however, that often somehow disappears. Are we willing to serve children like Jesus?

Beyond that, the parents in this story brought their children to Jesus. Frankly, we do not need teachers as much as we need parents who will actually bring their children to class. There is no lack of children in this congregation; there is a great lack of parents who view the church as a priority for them in their lives. *Let the children come to me.* If we do not, we should not be surprised when one day they don't choose to come to Jesus themselves.

Bryant Perkins