

Jesus Welcomes the Children

Mathew 19, Mark 10, Luke 18

Lesson Highlights: Jesus is inviting his followers to embrace a totally upside down understanding of status. In his cultural setting, Jesus welcoming children and treating them as worthy of his attention is a tangible illustration of the idea of the last being first. Each culture has its own status markers, and Jesus consistently invites his followers to reject them, choosing to put their trust in Jesus alone and not in their own status, or in what other people think of them

STORY POEM

Jesus blessed the kids and said,
“I want you all to see
Kids are important to God
Kids are important to me!”

STORY : PRESCHOOL

When Jesus went from place to place, he never went alone. His friends and helpers, the disciples, came with him. Other grown ups came to him. Parents came to him. Grandparents came to him. What about children? Do you think children came to Jesus?

The Bible tells us that one time when Jesus was out in the neighborhood, telling people about God, the grown ups started to bring their children to Jesus. They wanted their children to meet Jesus too.

People brought big kids to meet Jesus. People brought kids just like you to meet Jesus. People even brought little babies to meet Jesus.

Jesus would reach out his hands and put them on their heads. He would take the babies in his arms and rock them back and forth. Let's pretend to rock the babies like Jesus. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And stop.

When Jesus' friends saw how many children were coming to meet Jesus, they didn't like it at all.

They told the grown ups, "Stop! Jesus is too important to spend time with little babies! You are wasting Jesus' time. He has way more important things to do than rock your babies."

Jesus' friends thought they were helping. Jesus was very busy. He was very important. They thought they were helping Jesus have more time to do important things like tell people about God.

Jesus heard what his friends were saying. What do you think he did when he heard?

Jesus said in a loud voice so everyone could hear him, "No, no, no! Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! I want to meet the children. God loves everyone, grownups, kids, and babies. If God loves little babies, then so do I."

Jesus told the people something important about God. God loves everyone. God loves important people. God loves people who aren't seen as important. God loves grownups. God loves children. God loves little babies.

Jesus took the children up on his lap and gave them big hugs. He told the children how very important they are to God.

Our special words today are "Kids are important to God." Let's say that big and loud, "Kids are important to God." Let's say it squeaky-like, "Kids are important to God."

STORY - ELEMENTARY

Imagine you had the power to...

- Change one thing at school to make it as good as possible for everyone.
- Change one thing at home to make it as good as possible for everyone.
- Change one thing in the world to make it as good as possible for everyone.

What would you use your power to do? First, how about some silly ideas? Ok, now, what about some more serious ones?

Kids often don't have the power to change, even if they have great ideas for what changes should happen. Kids don't often have much power...at all. It's true today and

it was especially true at the time Jesus was on earth. At that time kids were often unvalued and they were certainly powerless.

But Jesus had a lot of opinions about power, and we're about to explore a story where the way Jesus acts shows his opinions. Let's see what you notice about it as we go along.

One day as Jesus was out and about, parents began to bring their children to him. They wanted him to touch them and bless them. The disciples watched this happening and began to scold the parents.

"You're bothering Jesus with these children."

"Could you keep hold of your kids? Don't let them run up!"

"Jesus doesn't have time for kids."

But when Jesus saw what was going on, he felt angry. Not at the parents. Not at the kids. At the disciples.

"No! Let the kids come here! Don't stop them from coming to me. Goodness! The Kingdom of God belongs to kids and anyone who is willing to be like them!"

Jesus often talked about this Kingdom. It's not a place on a map. It's any place where people live together like God really is king. They live together in ways that match who God is. And it's a place for kids.

After Jesus spoke, he took the children up in his arms. He placed his hands on their heads. He blessed them, one after the other.

Wonder Questions:

1. Have you ever wanted to participate in something and someone told you you couldn't because you weren't old enough?
2. What is something special that children do that adults don't?
3. What is something adults can learn from kids?
4. Jesus describes the kingdom of God as being a place where people live together in ways that match who God is, what do you think that would be like?

Prayer:

One of the most important things to know about Jesus is how much he loves and likes you. And one simple way to remind ourselves of that is a breath prayer—a prayer so short, you say the whole thing when you breathe in and then out.

So for one quiet minute, when you breathe in, pray, “You love me,” and when you breathe out, pray, “You like me.” You might find that because you are praying one thing over and over, you also sense God responding to you. Or it might just be a minute where you remind yourself of something that is so important about how Jesus feels about you.

Breathe in: You love me.

Breathe out: And you like me.

Activity: Back and Forth

Supplies: for every 2 players: 1 game board, 1 space marker, 1 die. To make the game board, cut the outside of the 2 long rectangles and tape them together at the “START” spot to create one long rectangular board.

The Bible only tells us a bit about the scene with the children, but we can imagine them coming up to Jesus, then being sent back, then being invited up again—back and forth! So, we’re going to play a back and forth game together.

To play:

- Sit across from each other with the game board between you and the marker on ‘start’ in the middle.
- Player 1 rolls the die one time and moves the marker that many spaces toward themselves.
- Player 2 then rolls the die one time and, starting from Player 1’s space, moves that many spaces toward themselves. So the marker will go back and forth along the board every turn.
- Take turns until someone rolls a number that brings the marker to their own finish line.

