

As Little Children

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

– Matthew 18:3 –

Life in a fallen world is filled with complexity. Sin, the curse, and death create an environment hostile to man's fulfillment and ultimate purpose. We are born unto trouble. As problems, disappointments, and fears compound, we tend to wander confusedly through life and, without the re-birth, fear accomplishing little more than merely meeting out our days under the sun. The best we know how to do in our fallen state is to vie for some form of available freedom and authority in a vain attempt to establish a legacy – whether that be progeny, wealth, influence, or namesake. This then becomes the fuel of our pride as we jockey for position in this race to the grave.

This tendency so consumes fallen man that even believers can assume it to be normative. Such was the mistake of the disciples themselves when they inquired of Jesus who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Instead of a harsh rebuke, our Master gently illustrated to his followers how wrong they were in their thinking by placing a little child in the midst of them and challenging them to become as such. The concept is radical, and the paradigm shift requires frequent meditation thereon.

Christ here taught us that entrance into (and, by implication, advancement within) His kingdom can best be secured by observing and imitating the ways of little ones. Nothing could be further from fallen man's concepts of advancement than this. It would seem to the natural man a regression. But for the believer, Jesus here chartered an entirely new university which would, throughout successive generations, be staffed with a vast and never-ending faculty of tiny instructors.

Children do not wear masks. Though sinners themselves, they remain innocent for a time and thereby tend to be completely genuine. They speak with little to no inhibition what they understand to be the truth. They eschew what they know to be dangerous. They own no conscious vices. They seek to be joyful, and their joy is infectious. When raised in loving homes, their cares and concerns are completely cast upon their parents as opposed to themselves, fully trusting and secure in the fact that their parents have their good as their chief obligation. Family unity is essential to them, and if they hate anything, it is when the peace of the household is disrupted. Children are naturally affectionate, desiring little more than to be loved and enjoying the opportunity to reciprocate. They rejoice in the triumphs of others, especially their own family members. They absorb information and learn rapidly. Their questions are sincere, never belligerent or rhetorical. They accept most truth, even difficult truth, rather fluidly. They are better at doing than planning, more apt to anticipate than to fret, and extend forgiveness more readily than harboring a grudge. Little ones to a certain age do not boast, strut, or lord. Wealth does not impress them. Power is to them a foreign concept. They are oblivious to the notion of popularity. They are rarely jaded and tend to see the redeemable in everyone. Their mere presence in a room alters the conduct of its adults. As one author once succinctly codified it, "The sacrament of childhood is thus a continuing revelation."

Lord Jesus, please help us to become as little children!