

Sunday 6 April 2008

Bringing Children to Jesus



Mark 10.13. People were bringing little children to Jesus

Jesus challenges attitudes and prejudices

The disciples had not fully grasped who Jesus was but clearly they were beginning to get the picture that Jesus was more than a prophet. So when some parents brought little children (Luke 18.15 suggests possibly babies or toddlers) for Jesus to bless them, the disciples consider Jesus to be either too busy or too important to be bothered with them.

Within the ancient world many did not have time for children and considered them almost to be half human until they reached puberty. Girls particularly in Greek society suffered and as newborn girls could simply be thrown out and discarded. Some at an early age were sold into prostitution.

The tragedy is that still today life in the womb has been devalued, and that children around the world still suffer from neglect and exploitation.

Jesus in stark contrast to such attitudes and prejudices highly values children. They have an important place in his heart.

Mark 9:33-37 Jesus and his disciples went to his home in Capernaum. ... (36) Then Jesus had a child stand near him. He put his arm around the child and said, (37) "When you welcome even a child because of me, you welcome me. And when you welcome me, you welcome the one who sent me."

Jesus welcomes children and instructs his disciples to do the same for in welcoming children, they are giving him a welcome.

Jesus also says that we have much to learn from children in their childlike trust **Matthew 18:1-4** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" (2) So Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, (3) and said, "I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. (4) The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child.

Jesus also gives a stern warning to anyone who causes one of these little to lose his faith in him.

Matt 18.6(GNB) "If anyone should cause one of these little ones to lose his faith in me, it would be better for that person to have a large millstone tied around his neck and be drowned in the deep sea.

How can we bring children to Jesus?

Parents were wanting to bring their children to Jesus. We too can be part of this. We can bring children to Jesus through:

- Our prayers.
- Our lives – children can be taught about God and his love for them. This can be in our homes – (being a parent, relation, friend is a great privilege and responsibility), at Church, at school) etc.
- At special services of welcome for the baby/child ie Thanksgiving and Dedication Services.

Whilst we can bring children in these ways to Jesus, we cannot make our children Christians. Just as God has given us freedom of choice, so children can make their choices. Children of course grow and develop; this can be true of their faith. For all children there needs to be the transition from simply believing because what others have taught them to where they believe because they want and choose to.

Jesus wants to bless children

Jesus laid his hands upon the children/babies brought to him and he blessed them. Jesus knows and loves each child- without exception.

[John 3:16-17](#) For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.

How we treat children matters immensely to Jesus. Finding ways to relevantly help children discover Jesus is a big challenge for us all. There are many more people in the UK who have a faith or who are open to discovering more about God. To enable children to make their own choice whether they will embrace Jesus means that they have to have the knowledge and experience to make such a choice.

It also means how children are treated here in the UK and throughout the world matters immensely – such things as fair trade can make such a difference.

How childlike are you?

I wonder whether you have ever welcomed Jesus into your life. The love trust and acceptance of a child points to how this can happen.

For Small Groups

Bible Readings Mark 9.33-37, 10.1-16

1. How does Jesus challenge our attitudes towards children?
2. What are children able to teach us?
3. Can we all be involved in bringing children to Jesus and what would that mean for you?
4. Consider the role that we have as parents, family members, friends, and Church in bringing children to Jesus.
5. Turn your thoughts and sharing into prayer? Consider what God has been saying to you through this small group time.

Please do not include in notes.

Mark 9:33-37 Jesus and his disciples went to his home in Capernaum. After they were inside the house, Jesus asked them, "What were you arguing about along the way?" (34) They had been arguing about which one of them was the greatest, and so they did not answer. (35) After Jesus sat down and told the twelve disciples to gather around him, he said, "If you want the place of honor, you must become a slave and serve others!" (36) Then Jesus had a child stand near him. He put his arm around the child and said, (37) "When you welcome even a child because of me, you welcome me. And when you welcome me, you welcome the one who sent me."

Mark 10.1-16

1 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. 2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied. 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." 10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." 13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When 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. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Luke 18.15

G1025

βρέφος

brephos

bref'-os

Of uncertain affinity; an *infant* (properly unborn) literally or figuratively: - babe, (young) child, infant.