

Review

We have been studying through the gospel of Matthew, and have most recently looked at Jesus' comments regarding marriage, divorce, and singleness. Now, we pick up in chapter 19, verse 13.

19:13 Children Brought To Him

Jesus was a national celebrity, and had just recently come into this region of Judea beyond the Jordan (19:1). Parents began bringing their children to Him. (The Greek word used here is "pahee-DEE-on," which can mean a child of any age, typically before puberty.)

This week, I was at the Calvary Chapel Bible College for the pastors conference, and my sister and niece were driving down to visit me during a couple hours of free time. When they drove up, pastor Jon Courson happened to be passing by on his way, obviously with somewhere to be.

I asked him if he could spare a minute to pop his head in the van and say hi to my niece Briana, since she thinks he about is the coolest guy in the whole world. Although he was on his way to another engagement, he made her the priority of the moment. He poked his head in the van, and called her by name. He blessed her, encouraged her, and told her how much Jesus loved her

It just made her whole year - more of a highlight than even seeing her Uncle Ron, if you can believe that!

Kids are blessed when we take the time to bless them. And when we do it in the name of the Lord, that leaves a lasting impression upon them in the Lord.

These children were being brought to Jesus for the purpose of prayer. Unfortunately, the disciples didn't see prayer for these precious young people as a priority.

The Disciples' Rebuke

You see, Jesus was very busy doing ministry. There were sick people to heal, and hurting people to whom He must minister. His time was too valuable to waste it with these children, the disciples thought. He was doing important work. They felt that He couldn't be bothered with

the "interruption" of blessing children.

And so, in the interest of protecting their master from the time-consuming task of interacting with the kids, the disciples rebuked their parents.

19:14 Don't Hinder Them

A couple came up to me a couple Sundays ago, very concerned that their little girl had interrupted a serious conversation I was having with someone in the foyer. But I reassured them that a little child coming up to give me a hug and tell me that they love me could never be an interruption. Jesus would most certainly agree, since He told the disciples, "Guys, don't prevent little kids from coming to Me."

Jesus didn't view the ministry of blessing the kids as any less than healing the adults. He didn't think that praying for grownups was somehow more important than praying for the babies.

And this was such an important issue that Jesus was indignant with the disciples for doing this (Mark 10:14). He said, "Let the children alone," literally, "Permit them, allow them, don't restrain them from coming to Me."

The Kingdom Of Heaven Belongs To Such As These

The reason that Jesus gives for allowing the children to come to Him is because...

Matt. 19:14 "...the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

At the beginning of chapter 18, Jesus had clearly taught them this. Mark and Luke tell us that He reminded them,

Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17 "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

19:15 Laying His Hands On Them

The people brought the children to Jesus, and He laid His hands on them. As a new Christian, I remember reading the Bible and notic-

ing that there was a lot of mentioning of the laying on of hands. A lot of times, it was an obvious reference to doing violence to someone (Gen. 37:22; Esther 6:2; Luke 22:53; etc.). But there were also spiritual applications.

- Laying hands on the sick so that they would recover (Mark 16:18).
- A warning not to lay hands on anyone too hastily (1Tim. 5:22).
- The laying of hands on an animal about to be sacrificed (Lev. 1:4).

As confusing as those things were, imagine how I felt when I read in Hebrews 6 that the laying on of hands was one of six "elementary teachings" about Jesus, part of the foundation!

When I read that, I knew that it was important. We actually spent an entire Sunday morning on this topic and all that it represents in the Scripture when we were going through the book of Hebrews.

A super-quick overview of that study would say, "The laying on of hands, like baptism, is a physical demonstration of a spiritual work. We see that symbolically, it is an impartation from one to another. Sometimes, it is the impartation of sin and guilt, other times spiritual authority. It sometimes is the impartation of healing, or of spiritual gifts."

And in this case here in Matthew 19, that impartation was the impartation of a blessing. This is demonstrated way back in the book of Genesis, when Jacob is an old man in Egypt. When his son Joseph came with his two oldest sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, Jacob laid his hands on their heads and spoke blessings over them, saying,

Gen. 48:16 "...Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

A great blessing, but Joseph noticed that his father had put his right hand on the younger son, Ephraim. This wasn't correct, because the right hand was reserved only for the firstborn.

Gen. 48:17-20 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father,

“Not so, my father, for this one is the first-born. Place your right hand on his head.” But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.” And he blessed them that day, saying, By you Israel shall pronounce blessing, saying, May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!”
Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

This is our first biblical example of speaking blessing over someone while laying hands on them.

This is the same thing that Jesus is doing when...

Mark 10:16 ...He took them in His arms and {began} blessing them, laying His hands upon them.