

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND CHILDREN

Mark 10:13-31

Key Verse: 10:15

"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

In the last passage, we studied why Moses gave a [certificate](#) of divorce. It was actually a tragic story. The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for several centuries. They came out of Egypt through the leadership of Shepherd Moses. They were no longer slaves. But their slave mentality and slaves' bad habits didn't go away. Outwardly, they were chosen people. But inwardly they were full of slave mentality. Among their bad habits, the habit of abusing women was so unlawful and lacked a humanitarian basis. For example, a man who had great punching power scared one woman after another. When the man was tired of one woman, he had the power to abandon her. Those who had some money did the same thing. A woman is a mother of the universe. Yet Hebrew mothers were treated like animals. They were liberated from the Egyptian Empire, but they were not liberated from the abuse of men. Shepherd Moses saw his people randomly abuse and abandon women like twelve year old horses. So Moses prayed about it and gave them [the law of divorce](#). After divorce, a man should give a certificate of divorce to a woman. The [law of divorce](#) made it very difficult for a man to divorce a woman without any clear reason, such as adultery or murder. But some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Moses permitted divorce by giving a certificate of divorce. It is right for anybody to divorce his wife." By saying this, they wanted to trap Jesus, claiming that he did not keep the Ten Commandments. But when Jesus talked about God's creation of man and woman and their union in the paradise (6-9), the Pharisees ran away one by one until no one was left. Today we are going to study mainly how to enter the kingdom of God. And we will see the agony of a rich young man and the disciples' "take for granted" mentality.

I. Jesus and children (13-16)

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them (13). People knew that there was a blessing in Jesus. So they brought all their children to Jesus to have him lay his hand on their heads to be blessed. But the disciples saw that some children were very noisy; some children's runny noses made their faces and jackets dirty. They were smelly and not yet qualified to come to Jesus. So his disciples rebuked them, "You children! Turn around and go back! Otherwise, we will do something to you." When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. This was a very trivial matter to worldly people. We can watch many royal parties. There are no children, only grown-ups—mainly old people who have authority over others or renowned young people. They all come to the party couple by couple. We can see in the movie "The Sound of Music" that the Von Trapp family had a party. But no children were allowed. Even Captain Von Trapp's children were not allowed. So they were walking around outside the house. There, Maria danced with a boy. When Captain Von Trapp saw this scene, he tightened his white gloves and was ready to dance with Maria. This was the real beginning point of romance between Maria and Captain Von Trapp. To worldly people, ignoring children is a trivial matter. But Jesus was very indignant.

If Jesus were the master of the banquet, only children would be allowed to attend, not the snow white old men or outstanding young men. Why did Jesus rebuke his disciples when they drove the children away from him? 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" (14b). In verse 15 Jesus again urged, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Children are known as great eaters and are troublesome in many ways. Above all, they are known to be too noisy. But Jesus told his disciples, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." What could be children's greatness as Jesus mentioned?

First, children trust their parents. Children are the source of joy to a family. If you don't understand that children are a source of joy, let's think about a nursing home where there are many dying old people doing nothing and only killing time. On the other hand, suppose there is one family. The parents work hard during the daytime. Then they all get together in the evening. They hug each other and talk with each other and sometimes there's a fight between father and son to eat more ice cream. But such children are not orphans because they have their parents. Children usually think that their father is the number one man in the world in wrestling and boxing. As a result, children trust and obey their parents unconditionally. When they learn naturally how to trust and how to obey their parents, their characters are formed. They are very happy people, like a miller on the river. Their trust in their parents is absolute. Sometimes we watch the CBF meeting. Children brag about their fathers that they are number one. Then we feel there are many number one fathers in our church. And there are many secure children in our church, too.

Distrust is one of the big problems. There are many parents who adopt children. When they are young, the children just follow their parents as their own parents. When they grow up, they come to know that their parents are not their real parents, their own flesh and blood. Distrust begins to sprout. And there is no way to stop their distrust. When distrust grows in their hearts, they are very unhappy, not knowing their roots. So it is wise that adoptive parents don't ignore them because they are young. They must tell them the truth that they are their adoptive parents and show them affection and plant trust in their hearts. Then there is no problem in the family.

Jesus saw children's tendency to trust their parents. Jesus saw that this is the quality a man needs to enter the kingdom of God. When we want to enter the kingdom of God and enjoy eternal life in paradise, we must learn how to trust others, and ultimately how to trust our Lord Jesus Christ. But after the 18th century, relativism came into men's hearts. Trust and obedience became relative. In most cases, parents show trust and love to their children hundreds of times. But their children pick out one failure in their parents' trust and affection toward them. And they don't trust their parents or obey their parents anymore. There is a girl who became 18. She did not learn how to trust her parents who were suffering in a foreign land to overcome a sense of foreigners' mentality and to make a living. The girl never understood her parents' agony. She only complained for so many years. She has no specific complaining topic. But compared with other children who look better than she, she

became immediately fatalistic.

Childhood does not stop at the age of 18, as American law implies. A child's trust grows and grows until he becomes a grown up person and until he becomes a grandfather and great-grandfather. Age 18 is not the time of exodus for young kids. Age 18 is the time of testing their trust and purity. There was a young student who was studying at the U. of C. He never looked around at girls because he had a promise from his father. The promise was: "If you finish college without contacting any girls, God will give you an angel-like bride." He took it to his heart and never looked at a girl. He always avoided the places where the girls were. The trust between his father and himself was a kind of comic one, too. One time his father bought a new car. It was a Saturday and his father gave him a chance to try the new car. His father was very happy that his son tried the car first. Then around 11:30 a.m. his son called on the phone and said that the car was scratched by a four-lane cement divider. It was smashed in the front and rear. One tire was ground to the rim and the side was greatly dented. To his father, the car was not the problem. But his message preparation was the problem. In the midst of his message preparation, he had to go to the U. of C. with a tow truck. His father asked him, "Why didn't you drive carefully? You know, this is Saturday. I have to prepare my Sunday message." Then the son said, "You know, I study for you, staying up all night almost every night because our grading system is a curve system." His life purpose was not completely in God at that time. So his life purpose and studying hard was for his father. After hearing his son's defense, his father understood him and joyfully towed the new car, mangled by the cement lane divider. Father and son laughed a while about the event, and they slept very well.

The son finished his Ph.D. in analytical chemistry. Now he is working in a company. But he does company work during the evening time. During the daytime he fishes and teaches students the Bible one to one. His father's joy of life is that his son accepted Jesus Christ by the good influence of his father.

Second, children's purity. We have to think about children's purity. There are many kinds of children. Most children are noisy. One kind is eating too much. Another kind of children is enjoying fun even with computer games and by reading comic books. They do not study according to their parents' wishes. But children's hearts are pure. This is the reason Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." If we think about children's purity, it is indeed heart-moving. The exemplary person in the United States in purity is definitely President Abraham Lincoln. He studied for himself. He had no money and he looked too long and too thin. His cheek bones stuck out. The number of his hairs was countable. But he was very pure in his childhood. He worked hard during the daytime and supported his family. He also helped his mother by doing housework. He did not go to school regularly. Sorry to say, he was not a Princeton Ph.D. But he was an errand boy at a house. When he wanted to study, he had no paper or pencil. So he discovered a way to write letters on his shovel with charcoal. In this way, he learned basic English. Next, he unceasingly read many books, especially about many heroes in Plutarch's books. Later, he studied hard for the bar exam. He passed the bar exam the first time and became a lawyer. That was his educational background. But no one could have read more than he had read. He was once a post office

manager in a deep mountain village. At that time, his job was not such a good job. Not many of those who received letters sent letters. So his office was never busy enough to be a post office. But he saved all the money the post office earned for ten years, and he sent it back to the main post office. So he was greatly admired as a man of pure heart. I heard from an American medical doctor called Dietrich many slandering stories about Abraham Lincoln. The doctor said in installing a railroad station he became a multi-millionaire by taking government money. But nobody believes his impurity. Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." On the other hand, those whose hearts are impure cannot see the kingdom of God or enter the kingdom of God.

There was an English missionary to Manchuria named Matthew Rich. He worked in Manchuria as a missionary for 25 years. In the 24th year, one young man came to his office and looked around at the walls. He found a water watch. In order to get the water watch, he pretended to believe in Jesus. Missionary Matthew Rich baptized him and made him a leader of his village in the future Christian community. One day the young man came and said to him, "I don't believe in Jesus. I wanted to have your water watch. So I pretended to believe in Jesus." Missionary Matthew Rich treated him with a good lunch and prayed for him that he would be a member of the kingdom of God. Missionary Matthew Rich went back to England when his missionary term was more than over. The man who took the water watch from him saw Missionary Matthew Rich's pure heart and compassion. His spiritual eyes were opened. Missionary Matthew Rich went back, trusting the work of Manchuria in the hands of God. Later he heard the young man who took away his water watch became a great evangelist, not only in his community, but also in a large territory of Manchuria. His 25 years of pure dedication to Jesus was not in vain. Pure men are not only privileged to enter the kingdom of God, but also pure men are always very precious people in the sight of God. They are good and faithful servants of God because of their pure hearts.

But these days, after drinking the poison of relativism, there are many impure people. One pastor in Evanston divorced his wife and married a young woman. But he keeps on ministering in the church. As long as he is honest in finances, the church members don't say anything about his divorce and remarriage. What a wretched world it is because of impurity.

We must trust our parents. We must be pure in our personal lives when we are young. Then God gives abundant blessing and ordains us as his children. Look at verse 16. "And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." This is the picture of Jesus blessing the children to be members of the kingdom of God because they were trusting and pure-hearted. Let's pray that we may trust in Jesus and keep our hearts pure when we are young, and when we are old. Purity is the ticket to the kingdom of God for those who believe in Jesus. Even though they believe in Jesus, without purity in their souls, they have no ticket to the kingdom of God. Relativism can bring a little benefit to a man or a woman. But it is the way to become an impure man and impure woman. Nobody is happy as an impure man. And nobody is happy as an impure woman. May God grant us a pure heart and pure soul so that we can be happy all the time. Most importantly, may we be qualified to be accepted to the kingdom of God. True children of God are very happy, not just because of God's blessing, but because their hearts are pure and there are no demons working in their hearts.

II. The rich young man (17-25)

Look at verse 17. "As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" In Jesus' time, those who were called rich young men were very honored in the society and people generally thought they were men of fortune. It was because most people suffered from hunger and the oppression of the Roman Empire. But as Jesus started on his way, the rich young man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. He said, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

From his words, Jesus knew what his problem was. There is only one who is good; he is God. When the man said, "Good teacher," he was confused. It was common knowledge that God is good and everyone else is not good. So Jesus asked him, "Why do you call me good?" (18) It was to plant faith in him that Jesus himself is the Son of God. So Jesus said, "Why do you call me good? No one is good--except God alone."

Then Jesus tested him to see whether he had trust and purity in God. Look at verse 19. "You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" It was a serious test to him to see if he was a man of trust and purity. Look at verse 20. "'Teacher,' he declared, 'all these I have kept since I was a boy.'"

Look at verse 21. "Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'" This was a test of how he became a wealthy man when he was young. And this was a test if he uses money for the glory of God or for his own pleasure. At that time, as I said before, to become a rich man when one was young was a miracle. Without cheating and being cheated and committing fraud and being defrauded and destroying others' estates to make them his own, it was impossible. This man was a worldly man who knew how to live in the world. But he was not happy. Every night when he went to bed, he felt he could not get up the next morning. The next morning, he got up and wanted to eat breakfast. But he had no taste for breakfast, thinking about how to spend time in this "cheating and being cheated" world. He really didn't like to be a cheating man. He wanted to be a man of trust and purity. But once he lost his trust and purity he could not restore it. He had some money, but he felt deadness in his soul every moment. Sometimes he felt he was living. Sometimes he felt he was a dead man. In his confusion, he went to Jesus, wanting to learn how to get eternal life so that he could feel God's life circulating in his body as a wealthy young man. Jesus gave him a very easy and terrible test and made him sad (22). Jesus' words were from the Ten Commandments: "You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" He was sure that he kept all these commandments. But when Jesus said to him, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me," the sky became yellow to his eyes. Look at verse 21. "Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'"

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. There was not even a time of making a decision. He was a man of no choice. In his mind and soul, money was packed up. He had no "on the other hand," like Reptevye in "Fiddler on the Roof."

Jesus was very sorry. There is abundant treasure in heaven for men of trust and purity. But men were all corrupted in this world and the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world seemed to be impossible. So Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" (23) Actually, his disciples also wanted to be wealthy men. So they were amazed at Jesus' words. Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (24-25). This is the reason there are seemingly not many devoted Christians. To give up the treasures of the world is so hard, as hard as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. But there are many who love Jesus more than worldly treasures. If we love worldly treasures, we become suicide candidates. If we love Jesus and heavenly treasures, we are joyful and the life of God circulates in our souls.

III. The disciples complain (26-31)

The disciples were even more amazed and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" (26) To the disciples it was not a matter of salvation, but a matter of money. They really wanted to be wealthy men by virtue of Jesus. But Jesus taught them the secret of getting heavenly treasure. They were very angry among themselves and complaining. Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God" (27). Jesus explained that God could change them to be men of trust and purity. Then Peter bitterly complained. Peter said to Jesus, "We have left everything to follow you!" (28) It is true that they left everything to follow Jesus. In Peter's case, he left his sweet home and his fishing business. Peter bragged that he left everything to follow Jesus. But he did not leave his human ambition. Jesus said in verses 29-30, "I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life." In this part, Jesus urges them to abandon the desire of worldly wealth. Not only does Jesus urge them to abandon worldly wealth but he also warns them: "You are proud that you came first. But you will be the last" (31).

Our trust in Jesus and our purity in Jesus should be absolute and unchanging. If our trust and our purity in Jesus can be compromised for worldly wealth, we are not privileged to be called the children of God nor to see the kingdom of God nor to enter the kingdom of God.