

MORNING SERMON OUTLINE
CHILDREN IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
MATTHEW 18:1-4

Our chapter is a unified whole. It begins with a question from Jesus' disciples, which He answers by pointing them to a small child, then speaking of children and "little ones who believe in Me," then the question of how to respond to sheep who wander (metaphor changed) and how to deal with sin among Christians, and finally a question about forgiveness. All of this revolves around a basic theme: How followers of Jesus must regard & relate to each other, value & protect each other, seek to restore each other and forgive when sin breaks fellowship.

1. Bad question: "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

What was good in the disciples' question – faith in Him & His kingdom.

What was bad in their question – sinful & proud ambition,

- an obsession that persisted in their minds until after the Cross.

A "problem" we all have, as old & as universal as the human race.

2. Jesus' answer: "Be turned and become like children."

How our Lord responds to the question models the point He makes - not harsh, but simple & kind, yet pointed & clear.

Beyond the inner circle of disciples ("the Twelve") is a larger crowd, some or many with their children.

Jesus calls a small child forward. See a little one, 2 or 3 or 4 yrs old standing before the circle of Jesus' disciples, perhaps with Jesus' hands gently on his little shoulders.

And listen to Jesus' uncompromising words:

"Unless you are turned [passive] and become like little children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

That is, your whole way of thinking must radically change – from worldly craving for power, recognition, position, etc., to the humility seen in a small child.

What does this mean?

NOT: be ignorant & naïve. NOT: be pure & innocent.

BUT: be humble.

But are small children humble? In many ways "no!"

But in one way, "yes;" and that is what Jesus calls us to:

humble awareness of our total & constant dependence on God - on His grace & mercy working salvation *for* us & *in* us, with nothing of our own to deserve honors & power - in our case, because of our wretched & vile sin.

3. Jesus' saving humility & perfect model for us

The One who makes this demand is the Paragon, the Model of meekness and humility – Matt. 11:28-30, 20:28, Phil 2:6-8.

What if the Son had refused the humiliation of the incarnation & all the suffering, pain & shame that followed?

He did all of that for our salvation – from sin's curse & power, that we might be made like Him – starting with humility.