

Jesus Loves the Little Children

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 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." (Mark 10:13,14, NIV)

The disciples just don't get it. When they had quarreled about who's the greatest, Jesus took a child in His arms and told them that when they welcomed a child they welcomed Him (9:33-37). Now they're shooin' away children.

The disciples thought there were bigger and more important things to do than to take time for blessing children. Whenever the church thinks that way, it declines.

The lifeblood of the church is taking the next generation in its arms and blessing them.

Not only that, the coming of parents with children to Jesus is juxtaposed directly following Jesus' teaching on the sanctity and nonseverability of marriage. When you protect the marriage, then you bless the children. There are far too many fatherless or motherless children in this world, made so because parents opted out for so-called self-fulfillment rather than duty and fidelity.

Jesus took time away from a very busy schedule to spend it with children. He sets a great example for us. And He is indignant when we don't regard children as important.

I like the angry Jesus. He never gets angry out of personal pique or because He has been inconvenienced by someone. But He does get angry at injustice and the way less-fortunate people are treated.

In the synagogue, His anger is in full flower at the hardness of His critics' hearts that dared Him to heal on the Sabbath the man with the shriveled hand (3:5). You can

feel the bite in His voice when He inveighs against the hypocrites for criticizing His disciples for eating with unwashed hands (7:6).

But this is the first time Jesus has been angry with His own disciples. The reason? They were ranking people in order of importance — and regarding "little people" as not worthy of access to Him.

I do not know if there are children in heaven because I do not know at what age we will be in our new bodies. For example, if a Christian dies at 95 years of age with a multitude of ailments, surely those will be gone in heaven — and the resurrected body will not look like an earth body of 95 years. Perhaps the other end of the continuum applies — that a child will have a fully mature body as a result of resurrection transformation.

We really don't know except "we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). But, just for fun, let's imagine the receiving line in eternity with all the ecclesiastical heads, patriarchs, political leaders, kings and queens and princes. And let's use the idea that children will still be children in heaven. Whom would Jesus meet first? Would the dignitaries and officials be at the front of the line? Or would He first welcome the children who run to Him?

I think the little kids would race to Him without inhibition, and He would open His arms to them. If that's the case, then it serves us all well to have the heart of a child.

The kingdom of God belongs to those who run to Jesus, desiring to be embraced by Him.

GEORGE O. WOOD is general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. Visit On Your Mark at pe.ag.org for a link to On Your Mark video and audio podcasts with Dr. George O. Wood.

Email your comments to pe@ag.org.

A prayer of response

Lord Jesus, I want the trusting heart of a child. Help me also to be alert to every opportunity to bless a child.



Two Great Questions

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?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good — except God alone." (Mark 10:17,18, NIV)

We know this man as the rich young ruler. Matthew, Mark and Luke all identify him as having great wealth. Matthew tells us he was young (19:20) and Luke that he was a ruler (18:18).

He came at a time when Jesus had "started on His way." What way was that?

It was the way to the cross. Jesus had begun the journey out of Galilee. Shortly we find Him in Jericho (Mark 10:46) and then Jerusalem (11:1). The fact that Jesus was headed toward the cross textures His later response to this man (10:21), since Jesus will only ask him to do what He himself is doing — laying down His life.

We can learn from this man's approach to Jesus.

We should run to Him. We should not delay or hold back. We should not be casual in our approach. We should not run from Him.

We should fall on our knees. We should reverence Him, bowing before Him as an inferior does to a superior. Falling on our knees is a mark of humility. It is the act of a supplicant.

We are not big shots around the Lord. This man had title and wealth, and he commanded others — but in Jesus' presence he was on his knees.

We should respect Jesus for who He is in character. While it becomes apparent that this man does not understand the meaning of the term "good" when he addresses Jesus, nevertheless his very use of the word indicates he thought well of Jesus. In his eyes, Jesus was of good reputation.

We should ask the big questions. There is no

more important question than how to obtain eternal life. And Jesus alone has the answer to that question.

Jesus, however, began His answer with a question of His own: "Why do you call me good? No one is good — except God alone."

What's happening here? Is Jesus denying His divinity?

No! He engages in a teaching moment. The wealthy young man had not thought through his designation of Jesus as good. Jesus makes him stop and think, *Do you really know what it means to be "good"?*

For Jesus, goodness meant the absence of any impurity or sin. No human can match that. As Paul later said, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10).

Only God is good. Jesus later clearly affirmed His identity when asked by the high priest, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus" (Mark 14:61,62).

The very first stirrings of opposition to Jesus came when He forgave the sins of the paralytic. His opposition understood very clearly that in forgiving sins Jesus was asserting a right that belonged only to God, for they said, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (2:7).

Jesus knew the young man did not consider Him to be divine. However, Jesus knows His own identity. He knows that He is good, and that He alone is good: that through the cross His goodness will become a blanket under which we all can crawl. We are covered by His righteousness.

GEORGE O. WOOD is general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. Visit OnYourMark.org at pe.ag.org for a link to On Your Mark video and audio podcasts with Dr. George O. Wood.

Email your comments to pe@ag.org.

A prayer of response

Lord Jesus, You have the answer to all my questions. I call You good because I know who You are: the Son of the living God.

