



MATTHEW

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

The King's Little Ones!

Matthew 18:1-11

Message #50 of 80 – S1083

Sermon given on February 4, 2024



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The King's Little Ones!

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Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Matthew 18**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The Savior-King and His Kingdom**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

Teaching

- **The King's Little Ones!**
- Our text takes place right after Jesus does the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth.
- **Matthew 18:1**
- This seems to be a regular conversation the disciples engaged in.
- Even on the evening of Jesus' betrayal, they are disputing this (**Luke 22:24-26**).

Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. ²⁵ And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' ²⁶ But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

- Jesus had just done the miracle of the coin in the mouth of the fish for Peter.
- Did that mean Peter was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
- James and John expressed their opinion of this when they asked to be seated next to Jesus in His kingdom (Mark 10:35-37).

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." ³⁶ And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³⁷ They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."

- This is a claim of greatness.
- There is something hardwired into the human psyche that seeks greatness.
- We were created to reflect the image of God and God is great.
- Sin has corrupted the God-ordained desire to seek greatness for God's glory to seeking greatness for self-glorification.

- Jesus is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- To be great, we must become like Him.
- The more like Him we become, the greater we are in the kingdom of heaven.
- Jesus responds with a practical illustration.
- **Matthew 18:2-3**
- ‘converted’ – Before you concern yourself with greatness, you concern make sure you are in the kingdom.
- This requires a conversion from your previous unsaved state to a state that can enter the kingdom.
- Jesus said something similar to Nicodemus (John 3:3).
Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
- Don’t miss the phrase, ‘and become like little children’.
- That is not an event, it is a process.
- We call that process sanctification.
- Once someone is saved, and they start changing, they begin a journey toward child-like faith.
- The more mature you are in your faith, the child-like your faith ought to be.
- Jesus then describes the key characteristic of child-like faith.
- **Matthew 18:4**
- Most of the disciples were common, uneducated men.
- There was nothing particularly special about any of them.
- What made them think they might be great in the kingdom of heaven?
- Being with Jesus resulted in them doing great things.
- All of them had been used to work miracles.
- Just the fact that Jesus chose them out of all those who followed Him to be His disciples may have led them to the false idea that they were great.
- ‘humbles himself’ – this must be an act of the will.
- God can humble us and will if He deems it necessary.
- But His desire is that we would choose to humble ourselves (**1 Peter 5:6-7**).

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

- This is one of the upside-down truths of our faith.
- Greatness is achieved through humility. Humility is deliberately making yourself lower.
- As we grow in humility, considering ourselves less and less, the greater we become in the kingdom of heaven.
- At the same time as we grow in humility, the less we care about greatness in this life.
- Jesus then gives a warning that we don't want to dismiss.
- **Matthew 18:5-7**
- 'little ones' can be interpreted as children.
- It might also refer to those who are less mature in their faith, or to the marginalized due to some lack in their life.
- Like little children, those who are not mature in their faith are vulnerable to those who might abuse or deceive them.
- As mature believers we have a responsibility to help people into the kingdom of heaven and once there we need to guide and protect them until they are mature.
- If, as mature believers, someone causes one of Christ's little ones to sin, it would be better to die a horrible death than face your Savior with that on your conscience.
- This may be suggesting that someone who claims to be a believer and leads less mature Christians to sin will face a horrible judgment.
- Jesus says something He has said before.
- **Matthew 18:8-9**
- This is a warning to take sin seriously.
- Jesus is not suggesting that we cut off our hands or pluck out our eyes.
- Our hands and eyes are just the vehicles that we use to sin; they are not the source of sin.
- This is not suggesting that believers can go to everlasting fire or hell.
- By using extremes, Jesus is telling us to be extreme in our efforts to make the corrections in our lives in the things that cause us to sin and in especially with the sins that we commit that might cause others to sin.

- Jesus then addresses our attitude toward those who may not be as spiritually mature as we are.
- **Matthew 18:10**
- Jesus taught that we should not judge others (**Matthew 7:1-2**).
Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.
- To despise someone to judge them as unworthy or beneath you.
- This week Kelly and I watched Aurora and Harvey for the evening.
- We played dominos after dinner.
- It is not a very complicated game but there is a little strategy in it.
- Harvey is six and when we first started playing, he thought we were supposed to build them into structures or put them in a row to knock them down.
- I could have chosen to despise Harvey's lack of knowledge and experience, or I could help him learn how to play the game.
- He ended up in second place – and no, I didn't win. Kelly did.
- Every believer matters to God. Regardless of how weak or immature their faith might be.
- There may be believers around you who are stacking up spiritual things and knocking them down for the cool sound they make.
- They may be struggling with something you mastered a long time ago.
- Maybe you know a lot more about the Bible than they do.
- Don't roll your eyes at them when they ask a question you think should be obvious – that is despising them.
- Remember, compared to Jesus, you are spiritually immature.
- You wouldn't want Him rolling His eyes at you, right?
- Until you are perfect, you are still working to 'become as little children' with child-like faith.
- The reference to angels here is another verse that gives us the notion of Guardian Angels.
- It is enough to say that God knows how we are treating others.
- This section closes with Christ telling us why He came.
- **Matthew 18:11**
- Mankind was created in the image of God for God's glory.
- Sin separated us from God.

- Jesus came to make a way for us to be reunited with God.
- And once we have been reunited with God the Father, Jesus would have us join Him in His mission to save that which was lost.
- It begins when we are converted and then develops as we become like children by faith in Christ.
- The text began with the disciples wanting to know which of them was the greatest in the kingdom of God.
- As usual, it was the wrong question.
- And as usual, Jesus didn't despise their spiritual immaturity but took it as an opportunity to teach them about the kingdom of heaven.
- I would like you to take a moment and look around at the other people in this room.
- These are the people you are going to spend an eternity with in heaven.
- They are your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- And instead of competing to see who will be the greatest we are to help each other grow in humility.
- As we do that, the world will see more and more of Jesus, and maybe they will meet their Savior.
- The worship team is going to come up for one last song.
- We are going to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us grow in child-like faith.
- As a final thought, a good way to experience God's heart for the 'little ones' is by ministering to children.
- Pray about getting involved in the Children's Ministry.
- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us humble ourselves. **Pray!**
- Worship Team comes up to play the last song!