

RECEIVING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD

“Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall by no means enter it.”

Luke 18:17

WHEN our Lord blessed the little children He was making His last journey to Jerusalem. It was thus a farewell blessing which He gave to the little ones and it reminds us of the fact that among His parting words to His disciples, before He was taken up, we find the tender charge, “Feed My lambs.” The ruling passion was strong upon the great Shepherd of Israel, “who gathers the lambs with His arms and carries them in His bosom.” And it was fitting that while He was making His farewell journey He should bestow His gracious benediction upon the children. Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ is not here among us in Person, but we know where He is and we know that He is clothed with all power in Heaven and in earth with which to bless His people.

Let us, then, draw near to Him this day. Let us seek His touch in the form of fellowship and ask the aid of His intercession. Let us include others in our prayers and among these let us give our children and, indeed, all children, a leading place. We know more of Jesus than the women of Palestine did! Let us, therefore, be even more eager than they were to bring our children to Him that He may bless them and that they may be accepted in Him, even as we are. Jesus waits to bless! He is not changed in Character, or impoverished in Grace—as He still receives sinners, so does He still bless children—and let none of us be content, whether we are parents or teachers, until He has received our children and has so blessed them that we are sure that they have entered the kingdom of God!

Our Savior, when He saw that His disciples were not only backward to admit the children to Him, but even rebuked those who brought them, was much displeased and called them to Him that He might teach them better. He then informed them that instead of the children being regarded as intruders, they were most welcome to Himself and, instead of being interlopers, they had full right of access, for of children and of childlike persons His kingdom was composed. Moreover, He declared that none could enter that kingdom except in the same manner as children enter. He spoke with Divine certainty, using His own expressive, “verily,” and He spoke with the weight of His own personal authority, “I say unto you.”

These prefatory expressions are intended to secure our reverent attention to the fact that so far from the admission of children into the kingdom being unusual or strange, no one can find entrance there unless they receive the Gospel as a little child receives it. It is this statement of the Master which affords us a subject for this morning, which, may the Divine Spirit open up to us and impress upon our hearts. I shall speak upon three matters. First, upon the secret thought of the disciples which the Master refuted by the language of the text. Secondly, upon the open declaration of our Lord in the text. And, thirdly, upon the encouragement which He thus gives to us.

1. To begin with, let us deal with THE SECRET THOUGHT OF THE DISCIPLES—expressed by their actions though not spoken in words. And, first, it is pretty clear that the disciples thought the children were too insignificant for the Lord’s time to be taken up by them. If it had been a prince who wished to come to Jesus, no doubt Peter and the rest of them

would have diligently secured him an introduction. But, you see, these were only poor women with babies and small children. If it had been an ordinary person like themselves, they would not have repelled him with rebukes. But mere children! Sucklings and little children! It was too bad for these to be intruded upon the great Teacher!

A word is used about the youthful applicants which may signify children of any age, from sucklings up to 12 years—surely Jesus had worry enough without the intrusion of these juveniles. He had higher subjects for thought and graver objects of care. The children were so very little they were quite beneath His notice—so the disciples thought in their attention? If we think that children must be little in His sight, what are we? He takes up the isles as a very little thing. To Him the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers! Yes, we are all as things of nothing! If we were humble, we should exclaim, “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?”

If we dream that the Lord will not notice the little and insignificant, what think we of such a text as this—“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” Does God care for sparrows and shall He not care for little children? The idea of insignificance must be set aside at once. “Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” But are little children so insignificant? Do they not people Heaven? Is it not your conviction? It is mine—that they make up a very considerable part of the population of the skies! Multitudes of infant feet are treading the streets of the New Jerusalem! Snatched from the breast before they had committed actual sin—delivered from the toilsome pilgrimage of life—they always behold the face of our Father which is in Heaven. Of such is the kingdom of God.”

Do you call these insignificant? Do you dare despise children who are the most numerous company in the army of the elect? I might turn the tables and call the adults insignificant, among whom there can be found no more than a small remnant who serve the Lord. Besides, many children are spared to grow up to man’s estate and, therefore, we must not think a child insignificant. He is the father of the man. In him are great possibilities and capacities. His manhood is as yet undeveloped, but it is there and he that trifles with it mars the man. He who tempts the mind of a boy may destroy the soul of a man! A little error injected into the ear of a youth may become deadly in the man when the slow poison shall at last have touched a vital part. Weeds sown in the furrows of childhood will grow with the young man’s growth, ripen in his prime and only decay into a sad corruption when he himself declines.

On the other hand, a Truth of God dropped into a child’s heart will there fructify and his manhood shall see the fruit of it. Your child listening in the class to his teacher’s gentle voice may develop into a Luther and shake the world with his vehement proclamation of the Truth of God! Who among us can tell? At any rate, with the Truth in his heart, the child shall grow up to honor and fear the Lord and thus shall he help to keep alive a godly seed in these evil days. Therefore let no man despise the young or think them insignificant! I claim a front place for them. I ask that if others are kept back, at any rate their feebleness may make room for the little ones! They are the world’s future! The past has been and we cannot alter it—even the present is gone while we gaze on it. Our hope lies in the future—therefore by your leave, Sirs, room for the children, room for the boys and girls!

Again, I suppose that these grown-up Apostles thought that the children’s minds were too trifling. They are at their play and their childish mirth—they will regard it only as a pastime to be folded in Jesus’ arms—it will be mirth to them and they will have no idea of the solemnity of their position. Well, well! Trifling is it? Children are said to be guilty of trifling! Oh, Sirs, and are you not also triflers! If it comes to an examination upon the matter of trifling, who are the greatest triflers—children or full-grown men and women? What is greater trifling than for a man to live for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, or for a woman to live to dress herself and waste her time in company? No, more—what is the accumulation of wealth for the sake of it but miserable trifling? Child’s play without the amusement!

Most men are triflers on a larger scale than children and that is the main difference. Children, when they trifle, play with little things—their toys so breakable—are they not made on purpose to be trifled with and broken? The child with his trifles is but doing as he should. Alas, I know men and women who trifle with their souls and with Heaven and Hell and eternity! They trifle with God's Word, trifle with God's Son, trifle with God Himself! Charge not children with being frivolous, for their little games often have as much of earnestness about them and are as useful as the pursuits of men! Half the councils of our senators and the debates of our Parliaments are worse than child's play! The game of war is a far greater folly than the most frolicsome of boyish tricks!

Big children are worse triflers than the little ones can ever be. Despise not children for trifling when the whole world is given to folly! "Yes," they say, "but if we should let the children come to Christ and if He should bless them, they will soon forget it. No matter how loving his look and how spiritual his words, they will go back to their play and their weak memories will preserve no trace of it at all." This objection we meet in the same manner as the others. Do not men forget? What a forgetful generation do most preachers address! Verily, this is a generation like that of which Isaiah said, "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

Alas, many of our hearers must have the Gospel preached to them again and again and again till the preacher is well-near weary with his hopeless task! They are like men who see their natural faces in a glass and go their way to forget what manner of men they are. They still live in sin. The Word has no abiding place in their hearts. Forgetfulness? Charge not children with it lest the accusation is proven against yourselves! But do the little ones forget? I suppose the events which we best remember in advanced age are the things which happened to us in our earliest days. At any rate, I have shaken hands with gray-headed men who have forgotten nearly all the events which have intervened between their old age and the time of their childhood—but little matters which transpired at home, hymns learned at their mother's knee and words spoken by their father or sister have lingered with them!

The voices of childhood echo throughout life. The first learned is generally the last forgotten. The young children who heard our Lord's blessing would not forget it. They would have His countenance photographed upon their hearts and never forget His kind and tender smile. Peter, James and John and the rest of you are all mistaken and, therefore, you must suffer the children to come to Jesus! Perhaps, too, they thought that children had not sufficient capacity. Jesus Christ said such wonderful things that the children could not be supposed to have the capacity to receive them. Yet, indeed, this is a great error, for children readily enter into our Lord's teaching. They never learn to read so quickly from any book as from the New Testament.

The words of Jesus are so childlike and so fitted for children that they drink them in better than the words of any other man, however simple he may try to be. Children readily understand the Child Jesus. What is this matter of capacity? What capacity is needed? Capacity to believe? I tell you children have more of that than grown-up persons. I am not now speaking of the spiritual part of faith, but as far as the mental faculty is concerned, there is any quantity of the capacity for faith in the heart of a child. His believing faculty has not yet been overloaded by superstition, or perverted by falsehood, or maimed by wicked unbelief. Only let the Holy Spirit consecrate the faculty and there is enough of it for the production of abundant faith in God!

In what respect are children deficient of capacity? Do they lack capacity for repentance? Assuredly not! Have I not seen a girl weep herself ill because she has done wrong? A tender conscience in many a little boy has made him unutterably miserable when he has been conscious of a fault. Do not some of us remember the keen arrows of conviction which rankled in our hearts when we were yet children? I distinctly remember the time when I could not rest because of sin and sought the Lord, while yet a child, with bitter anguish! Children are capable enough of repentance, God the Holy Spirit working it in them. This is not conjecture, for we, ourselves, are living witnesses.

What, then, do children need in the matter of capacity? "Why, they have not sufficient understanding," says one. Understanding of what? If the religion of Jesus were that of modern

thought; if it were such sublime nonsense that none but the so-called “cultured” class could make heads or tails of it, then children might be incapable of its comprehension. But if it is, indeed, the Gospel of the poor man’s Bible, then there are shallows in it where the tiniest lamb in Jesus’ fold may wade without fear of being carried off its feet! It is true that in the Scriptures there are great mysteries where your leviathans may dive and find no bottom—but the knowledge of these deep things is not essential to salvation, or else few of us would be saved!

The things that are essential to salvation are so exceedingly simple that no child need sit down in despair of understanding the things which make for his peace. Christ crucified is not a riddle for sages, but a plain Truth of God for plain people. True, it is meat for men, but it is also milk for babes! Did you say that children could not love? That, after all, is one of the grandest parts of the education of a Christian—did you dream that children could not attain to it? No, you did not say that, nor dared you think it, for the capacity for love is great in a child! Would God it were always as great in ourselves!

To put the thought of the Apostle into one or two words—they thought that the children must not come to Christ because they were not like themselves—they were not men and women. A child not big enough, tall enough, grown enough, great enough to be blessed by Jesus? So they half thought! The child must not come to the Master because he is not like the man. How the blessed Savior turns the tables and says, “Say not, the child may not come till he is like a man, but know that you cannot come till you are like he! It is no difficulty in the child’s way that he is not like you—the difficulty is with you—that you are not like the child.” Instead of the child needing to wait until he grows up and becomes a man, it is the man who must grow down and become like a child! “Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall by no means enter it.”

Our Lord’s words are a complete and all-sufficient answer to the thought of His disciples and we may, each one, as we read them, learn wisdom. Let us not say, “Would to God my child were grown up like myself that he might come to Christ.” No, but rather may we almost wish that we were little children again, could forget much that we now know, could be washed clean from habit and prejudice and could begin again with a child’s freshness, simplicity and eagerness! As we pray for spiritual childhood, Scripture sets its seal upon the prayer, for it is written, “Except a man be born again He cannot see the kingdom of God.” And again, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” Thus much upon the secret thought of the disciples.

Now, I wonder whether any of you have such a thought as theirs lingering in your brain or heart this morning? I wonder whether you ever think in this fashion? I should not be surprised if you do. I hope it is not quite so common as it used to be, but I used to see, in certain quarters among old folks, a deep suspicion of youthful piety. The seniors shook their heads at the idea of receiving children into the Church of the living God. Some even ventured to speak of converts as “only a lot of girls and boys”—as if they were the worse for that! Many, if they hear of a child-convert, are very dubious, unless he dies very soon and then they believe all about him! If the child lives, they sharpen their axes to have a swing at him by way of examination. He must know all the doctrines, certainly—and he must be supernaturally grave!

It is not every grown-up person who knows the higher doctrines of the Word of God, but if the young person should not know them he is set aside. Some people expect almost Infinite Wisdom in a child before they can believe him to be the subject of Divine Grace. This is monstrous! Then, again, if a believing child should act like a child, some of the fathers of the last generation judged that he could not be converted, as if conversion to Christ added 20 years to our age! Of course, the young convert must not play any more, nor talk in his own childish fashion or the seniors would be shocked, for it was a sort of understood thing that as soon as ever a child was converted, he was to turn into an old man! I never could see anything in Scripture to support this theory, but then, Scripture was not so much cared for as the judgment of the deep-experienced people and the general opinion that it was well to summer and winter all converts before admitting them into the sacred enclosures of the Church.

Now, if any of you still have an idea in your head hostile to the conversion of children, try and get rid of it, for it is as wrong as wrong can be. If there were two enquirers before me now—a child and a man—and I received from each the same testimony, I should have no more right to distrust the child than to suspect the man! In fact, if suspicions must come in anywhere, it ought rather to be exercised towards the adult than in reference to the child who is far less likely to be guilty of hypocrisy than the man and far less likely to have borrowed his words and phrases! At any rate, learn from the Master's words that you are not to try and make the child like yourself, but you are to be transformed till you yourself are like the child.

II. Now we pass on to our second head, namely, THE OPEN DECLARATION OF OUR LORD wherein He sets forth His mind upon this matter. Looking at it carefully, we observe, first, that He tells the disciples that the Gospel sets up a kingdom. Was there ever a kingdom which had no children in it? How, then, could it grow? Jesus tells us that children are admitted into the kingdom. No, not only that some few are here and there admitted into it, but, “of such is the kingdom of God.” I am not inclined to get away from the plain sense of that expression, nor to suggest that He merely means that the kingdom consists of those who are like children. It is clear that He intended such children as those who were before Him—babies and young children—“of such is the kingdom of God.”

There are children in all kingdoms and there are children in Christ's kingdom. I am not certain that John Newton was not right when he said that the majority of persons who are now in the kingdom of God are children. When I think of all the multitudes of babies that have died, who are now swarming in the streets of Heaven, it does seem to me to be a blessed thought that albeit generation after generation of adults have passed away in unbelief and rebellion, yet enormous multitudes of children have gone streaming up to Heaven, saved by the Grace of God, through the death of Christ, to sing the high praises of the Lord forever before the Eternal Throne! “Of such is the kingdom of Heaven.” They give tone and character to the kingdom! It is rather a kingdom of children than of men.

Next, our Lord tells us that the way of entering the kingdom is by receiving. “Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall by no means enter it.” We do not enter into the kingdom of God by working out some deep problem and arriving at its solution or by fetching something out of ourselves, but by receiving a secret something into us. We come into the kingdom by the kingdom's coming into us. It receives us by our receiving it. Now, if this entrance into the kingdom depended upon something to be fetched out of the human mind by study and deep thought, then very few children could ever enter it! But it depends upon something to be received and, therefore, children may enter. Those children who are of sufficient years to sin and to be saved by faith, have to listen to the Gospel and to receive it by faith—and they can do this, God the Holy Spirit helping them.

There is no doubt about it, because great numbers have done it. I will not say at what age children are first capable of receiving the knowledge of Christ, but it is much earlier than some fancy. We have seen and known children who have given abundant evidence that they have received Christ and have believed in Him at a very early age. Some of them have died triumphantly and others of them have lived graciously—and some are here now, grown up to be men and women who are honorable members of the Church. Oh, Sirs, you who would wish to be considered “cultured” and thoughtful and, therefore, able to fetch a Gospel out of the deep well of your own consciousness—you will never be saved by that process! It is not that which comes out of you which will save you, but that which goes into you! Inventions and discoveries will not enable you to enter the kingdom—you must be receivers. You must sit at Jesus' feet and believe what He reveals. You must let your artful questions and your curious suppositions lie still and you must become a scholar—for the proud spirit which scorns discipleship will shut you out of the kingdom of God unless you crucify it! We enter the kingdom by receiving and, therefore, children can enter!

The next thing in the text is that if we receive this kingdom and so enter into it, we must receive it as children receive it. How do children receive the kingdom of God? The answer must be twofold, seeing there are two sorts of children—those who are mere babies and incapable of actual sin—and those who are quite capable both of sinning and believing. I shut out neither from the text because

I honestly think they are both there. In one Gospel our version reads, “infants,” and in the one before us, “little children.” We know that infants enter the kingdom, for we are convinced that all of our race who die in infancy are included in the election of Grace and partake in the redemption worked out by our Lord Jesus. Whatever some may think, we believe that the whole spirit and tone of the Word of God, as well as the Nature of God, Himself, lead us to believe that all who leave this world as babies are saved.

Now, how do they receive the kingdom, for in the same way must we receive it! Certainly children do not receive it by birth or blood, for we are expressly told in John’s Gospel that the children of God are born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh! All privilege of descent is now abolished and no baby enters into Heaven because it was born of a pious father or mother—neither shall any be shut out because his progenitors were atheists or idolaters! My solemn persuasion is that the child of a Muslim, or a Papist, or a Buddhist, or a cannibal dying in infancy is as surely saved as the child of the Christian! Salvation by blood or birth there can be none, for the Gospel dispensation does not admit of it. If saved, as we assuredly believe they are, infants must be saved simply according to the will and good pleasure of God because He has made them to be His own!

Neither are infants saved as the result of any ceremony. There is no mention in the passage of infant baptism and yet if there had been, such an ordinance as this appears to be a natural time for announcing it. Not so much as a word or a hint upon that practice can be found here and, therefore, I will not waste words upon a question quite foreign to my text. It is clear that our Lord is speaking of children, as such, and not as the subjects of a ceremony. Children dying in infancy in China and Japan are as truly saved as those dying in England or Scotland. Their need of (so-called) baptism cannot affect them one jot. Babes of swarthy mothers; infants born in the kraal of the Hottentot or the wigwam of the Red Indian are alike saved and, therefore, not saved by any outward rite, or by the mystic power of a priesthood. They are raised to the kingdom of Heaven by the Free and Sovereign Grace of God!

How are they saved then? By works? No, for they have never worked! By their natural innocence? No, for if that innocence could have admitted them to Heaven, it must also have sufficed to save them from pain and death. If sin is not upon them in some form, how is it that they suffer? The imputed sin which makes them die prevents our believing that they claim Heaven by right of innocence! They die because of Adam’s fall. Sad consequence of their being born of fallen parents. Mark their appealing looks as the dear little ones look up in their sufferings, as if they would ask why they must endure so much pain! We look at them with all the deeper grief because we cannot help them and are made to reflect upon the mysterious union of the race in its fall and sorrow.

The anguish of the dying little one is a proof of Adam’s fall and of its participation in the result. The dear babies live again, however, because Jesus died and rose again and they are in Him! They perish, as far as this life is concerned, for a sin which they did not commit—but they also live eternally through a righteousness in which they had no hand—even the righteousness of Jesus Christ who has redeemed them! We know little of the matter, but we suppose them to undergo regeneration before they enter Heaven, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and to enter the spiritual world they must be born of the Spirit. But whatever is worked in them, it is clear that they do not enter the kingdom by the force of intellect, or will, or merit—but as a matter of Free Grace—having no reference to anything that they have done or have felt!

In that same manner you, O man or woman, must pass into the kingdom, entirely through Free Grace and not at all by any power or merit of your own! You will enter Heaven as fully by Grace as if you had never lived a godly life, nor had practiced a single virtue. I said, the other evening, to an esteemed member of this Church who lies dying, “Dear Brother, you have been a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” He replied, “You say so, but I think nothing of what I have done. I am looking to Christ, alone.” Just so. That is the ground of salvation! There cannot be any reason for the salvation of that dear baby which has just passed the portals of the skies—it was born of a fallen race—except the Grace of God! And that Grace of God which saves the baby must save you and me. I have nothing else to rest upon but the baby’s Savior and no hope except the belief that the Headship of Christ comprehends me within itself, even as it comprehends the little one.

Now we have to think of another sort of children—those who outlive the time of infancy and become children capable of actual sin and of knowing Christ and being converted. Many of these, by faith, enter the kingdom. Now, as these children receive the kingdom of Heaven, so must we receive it. How do the children receive it? I answer, a child receives the Gospel with humility, with simple faith and with unworldliness. Children are not held up to us as an example in all things, for they have faults which we ought to avoid. But they are here praised in this point—the way in which they receive the kingdom. How does a child receive it? We have said first, with humility. He is humble enough to be without prejudice. Take a little child and tell him about Christ Jesus the Savior and if God blesses the telling of the story of the Cross and he believes it, he receives it without having any wrong views and notions to battle with.

Many a man goes to hear the Gospel with the idea that Christ is merely human. He cannot get rid of that prejudice from his mind and, therefore, he does not receive Christ Jesus the Lord. Another comes to hear the Word with the recollection of all that he has heard and read of infidelity, heresy and profanity—how can he profit till this is removed? Another comes with his mind stuffed with proud self-righteousness, with a belief in priestcraft, or with a reliance upon some form or ceremony. If we could get this lumber out of the soul there would be some hope—but all this is a hindrance. Now the dear child, as he listens to the story of the love of God in Christ Jesus, has none of these prejudices to spoil his hearing! Very likely He does not even know that such evils have been invented by man and he is blessed in his ignorance. He will find out the evil soon enough, but for the present he humbly drinks in the Word, and prays—

*“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look on me, a little child;
Pity my simplicity;
Suffer me to come to Thee.”*

Now, this deliverance from preconceived notions is what we greatly need! My highly cultured and learned hearer over yonder, you must come to Jesus as if you knew nothing! You must begin de novo, with a clean page, on which Jesus must write what you are to believe. Just as your little boy or your little girl must believe, even so must you. There is only ONE way for the shepherd and the sage, the philosopher and the peasant. The little child receives Christ humbly, for he never dreams of merit or purchase. I do not recollect ever having met with a child who had to battle with self-righteousness in coming to Christ. A child cannot say, “Lord, I have been a constant attendant at Church or at the Meeting House for years. I have taken the sacrament regularly for half-a-century!” Neither can he say with the Pharisee, “I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess.”

Now, when a little one believes in the Lord Jesus, it is always with a heart clear of boasting and with a soul which sings—

*“In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”*

That is how you will have to come to Jesus, my fine grown-up! You must doff those feathers of pride and strip off that finery of self-righteousness or you will find Heaven’s gate too low and too narrow for you! A little child is free from the pride of knowledge—it has no “culture” and research to heap up before the Cross. Certain men will not come to Jesus because they know too much. Their self-conceit will be their ruin. They have read and they have thought and they have studied and, therefore, they know better than Inspiration, better than Apostles and Prophets! But my big brother, you must be diminished and brought down from the chair of the critic to the stool of the scholar if ever you are to be saved. Saving truth enters the heart—it is not developed from within—and it will have to come into you as it comes into the child, simply by believing what Jesus says, or else you will be a castaway. There is no other way of your entering into the kingdom of God but by the door which admits a child!

A second point about a little child is that it is generally teachable. You do not find your children in the Sunday school, when the Lord blesses them, raising difficulties. They do not enquire how is the good news from Heaven consistent with reason? And how is this statement of Scripture to be reconciled with the spirit of the age? No, there is the bread of Heaven before the child and he eats it, though he does not yet know how the wheat was made into bread. That is how we must receive the kingdom—we must lay aside all hope of solving difficulties and simply believe upon the authority of God. Nothing short of this is faith! Children receive the Gospel without proposing amendments in it. “I should like your Gospel,” says one, “if you would alter it here and amend it there.” There is a clique abroad nowadays who are always for unsettling our faith in the old Truth of God, but a child receiving the Gospel knows nothing of such designs—he takes it from the Word of God just as he sees it there. In the same manner must we receive the kingdom of Heaven.

A child receives it, too, with a wondering realization of it. When you tell a believing child the promises of the Word of God, how he opens his little eyes! How fully he believes the Word of God! How ready he is to ask for the blessing and to receive it and act upon it! It is, to him, a matter of undoubted fact! I have seen people who profess to be Christians smiling at the matter-of-fact way in which a child has believed the Word of God—and yet we ought to believe it in the same way—and we shall never enter into the enjoyment of it till we do! In the child’s simple, honest, hearty way, we must believe the Word to mean what it says and to be a reality and a truth—and only then shall we know the marrow and fatness of the Gospel!

Once again, the child receives the Gospel in an unworldly manner. He has not to think of how he shall meet those heavy bills tomorrow, nor even of how he shall provide for his daily bread. He has not much to think of at all except that which he is taught. It is a grand thing to give all one’s mind to the teaching of Jesus, for then we are sure to learn! It is beautiful to see how contented children are. A child of a poor man is just as happy as a young prince—with a few bits of platter to play with, he is just as much at ease as if he could handle diamonds and rubies. The child has no ambition for great things. Why should boys and girls care for stars? They are satisfied with their lot—they crave not for thrones and kingdoms! Give them enough dirt to make a pie and they will be as merry as the birds in spring and much more satisfied than a millionaire if he could obtain sole possession of the Bank of England! In this respect children have an advantage over us because when they receive the kingdom of God they are not already full with the thoughts of the world and the cares of riches.

If you notice, our Savior has placed this incident just before that of the rich young man who went away sorrowful, as much as if He would set before us the man with his possessions who loses the kingdom in contrast with the child with none—and thinking about none—who receives the kingdom! Oh that you who are unsaved would let your business alone awhile and give your whole minds to seeking Christ! He is your main need! Oh that you would forget your worldly concerns a little and go into your chamber and cry, “Great God, I will seek after nothing else but You until I find You. I must have Christ or die! Lord, I cast all else aside and resolve to wait upon You till I am washed from sin and admitted into Your kingdom.”

Now, I think I hear someone murmur, “If this is true, what is the use of the exercise of private judgment?” The highest result of the exercise of judgment is that you resolve to sit at Jesus’ feet! You do not resign yourself to any pope, preacher, or human leader—but since Jesus is God, you feel quite safe in accepting His Infallible Word as your guide and, like a child, you sit at His feet! “Well,” asks another, “but what is the use of our obtaining learning and knowledge?” Here is one of the uses of it—it is not your learned man who rejects Christ—it is your man who has a smattering of learning and boasts of it! He that has an honest heart and is deeply learned always feels it sweet to be a child in the Presence of his God. The most gigantic minds in the world are the most childlike. Learn as much as ever you can and investigate as far as ever you please! But if God sanctifies your learning, it will help to make you more childlike so that you will all the more readily learn of Jesus!

“But then, what is the use of experience?” This is the best use of experience! What little I have ever had of experience has taught me that I cannot trust myself at all. It has taught me that I can neither think a good thought nor do a right act apart from my Master! My experience teaches me

to be sure of nothing unless I have it from my Lord's mouth and I think the more experience any man obtains the more will he be of that mind. "Still," says one, "surely we must advance in capacity and in attainments and become men?" I admit that very freely, but when in knowledge you are men, then in teachableness you will be quite sure to be children, for the greater a man becomes in the kingdom of God, the more a child he becomes! Yes, the greatest among us, who sat as high above us as the heavens are above the earth, is One who was called, "The Holy Child Jesus." When we see Him sitting in the midst of children who cluster all round Him while He clasps one and another to His bosom, we perceive that He is wonderfully much at home! We see He is just a holy, tender, lovely Man-Child, Himself, loving and being loved! Let us try to be such!

Do you not all love a man who is childlike in the frankness and loveableness of his nature? Do you not all wish that you could grow into children in simplicity and live a child's life in freedom from care? That is the use of increased capacity, that you may be more capable of being children—that you may have more capacity to receive the Truth from God because you are more conscious of your ignorance and emptiness. He is the best receiver who feels himself to be thoroughly empty and is, at the same time, as willing to be taught as a little child.

III. My time has gone before I noticed it and I must only say two or three words upon the last head, namely, THE GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT given by our Lord in the text. I cannot expatiate, but I pray you consider it, each one for himself. First, to all parents and teachers. Let us rejoice in the conviction that our children may be brought to Christ and let us labor earnestly to bring them, however little they may be! I hope we prayed about them while they yet knew nothing of our prayers and I hope we shall continue to pray for them till we see them safe in the arms of Jesus.

Next, what an encouragement this is to children! I am always glad to see the little ones so desirous to come to the Tabernacle service. I hope they can understand a good deal of what is said. Yes, I am sure they do, for I see their beaming faces! Dear little children, come to Jesus! Do not wait till you grow up, but seek the Lord early, for His promise is, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." And then what encouragement this is to all who are childlike! You feel that you do not know much; you mourn your lack of capacity for grasping the lofty Truths of the Word. You feel willing to be anything or nothing so that you may but be saved—surely the reception of the children will encourage you in the belief that Jesus will accept you!

And last of all, to my mind it is a sweet comfort concerning our race over which we have such cause to mourn. After all, when we think of infants being saved and of the Lord saying, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," we shall hope that out of all kindreds, nations and tongues there will be a number that no man can number in whom Christ shall see of the travail of His soul! Millions of infant souls compose the family above! If you have lost infants, you will rejoice when you remember that you will go to them though they will not return to you!