

In His Arms

Those who brought their children to Jesus did so purposefully. Most likely it was for healing that they came to Him, or it could be they sought the Master's touch of blessing upon their little ones for their future wellbeing. Perhaps, if they were believers, they came hoping their child too might receive a spiritual work of grace in their souls. Whatever the reason, the encounter would be filled with wonder and excitement for the little ones involved.

Interceding for others

Many came seeking personal help from the Lord Jesus Christ but a quick reflection on the gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry reveals that just as frequently it was other people who brought the needy to Christ for healing. This is a powerful lesson and a great encouragement for us to intercede for others and endeavour to bring others under the sound of Christ's voice, and the touch of His hand, in the gospel.

The privilege of parents

I am sure we can identify with the desire of these parents to share the Lord's goodness and mercy with their children. We have many examples in Scripture of both mothers and fathers bringing their children to the Saviour, such as the Syrophenician woman and Jairus. If love for our children and grandchildren causes us to yearn for the Lord's saving power in their lives, as it surely does, we have many good examples.

Why bar the way to Jesus?

Why the disciples were an obstruction to these parents and children is hard to know. Were they being protective of Jesus? Were they trying to steward the crowds like doorkeepers, deciding who should gain access to the Lord and who should not? Were they ranking the people by need, imagining themselves qualified to make such judgments? Their language is needlessly harsh, they rebuked the parents. The Lord's displeasure is equally firm; 'He was much displeased'.

Childlike faith is a pattern

The disciples should have known better. It is not a preacher's job to decide who is to be given access to the Lord, nor an apostle's role to choose who may be brought into the church of the Lord. Preachers are called to preach salvation by grace and freely declare forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ.

If any come it will be the Lord who draws and we must not stand in their way. This was another important lesson for the disciples. Not only must children be welcomed, they are models of us all. Everyone who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ must come, will come, with childlike humility, meekness and trust. It is the nature of true faith and the effect of true conversion.

Parents take note

How encouraging to hear the Saviour's words. I feel sure they were loud and emphatic. Loud enough to be heard by the mistaken disciples and sufficient to reach the ears of those being frightened away from the Lord. Let them come! Stand back! Allow them through! Suffer the little children! Forbid them not! These are sweet words of encouragement to every parent. The Pharisees did not bring their children to Jesus! Let us as parents seize these words, employ them and plead them before the Lord for our own children – even the big ones.

Happy outcome

What a reception when the children reach the Saviour. I imagine them running with infectious excitement. Do not for a moment think of this encounter as a solemn, dignified and formal procession. These were children, not merely infants in arms, but toddlers and likely up to age twelve and more. There would be shouting, laughter and joy. The Lord embraced them, blessed them and lifted them up in His arms. This is one of the most delightful scenes in the Bible and a picture of a believer entering into a knowledge of the joy of the Lord.

He took them in His arms

You may know Fanny Crosby's hymn, 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus'. It is a beautiful theme. Jesus' arms are arms of

strength and tenderness. They are suited for protection and gentleness. They provide healing and affection, and bring comfort and encouragement. Our thoughts this week will dwell upon some of the blessed privileges of being safe in the arms of Jesus Christ. As believers and members of Christ's church we are frequently called 'little children'. How blessed to hear our Saviour say, 'come unto me ... for of such is the kingdom of God.'

Amen

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