

February 12

Scriptures: Read Matthew 18

Key Verse: “Unless you... become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)

Overview

Even the disciples had egos. This must have been at the root of their question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Like you and me, they would want to hear Jesus say, “Frankly, in all honesty, you are.” And even as we humbly accepted it, we would be privately growing, with smug joy at our special status. Well, Jesus characteristically surprised them all. He brought a little child, stood him among them and said, “You must become like a child or you’ll never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes a little this in My name, welcomes Me.”

The last thing an adult would expect is to be told to regress to childhood. What’s the point? It is simply this – a child recognizes authority. A child is forever learning, has a boundless enthusiasm, innocence, and malleability that an adult just doesn’t possess. And Jesus goes on to say that anyone who misleads a child in going to be in big trouble. More than that, Satan’s going to be in big trouble because of the stimulus he has provided to sin in mankind.

Jesus then turns to His disciples, changing pace somewhat, and says that if their foot or their hand or their eye causes them to sin, they should cut it off or gouge it out, or somehow maim themselves in order to avoid sinning.

Certainly, Jesus is not expecting a bunch of disfigured and dismembered disciples to be following Him about. He is, as He often does, using exaggeration for the sake of emphasis, but the point He’s making is clear. Sin is a serious thing. And even a child is relatively sinless, so too we must approach the kingdom of heaven with that kind of innocence – an innocence which comes not from self-generated righteousness but from a committed belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Prayer

We come to You today as little children—humble, teachable and full of trust. Take our pliable lives and shape us, Father, into the image of Your Son.