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Christian Education

Luke 18:15-17
“Be Such Babies”

*Lord to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life. Amen.*

Dear friends in Christ,

If you have an older brother or sister, you’ve probably heard the words: *Don’t be such a baby!* Or maybe you’ve heard it from mom or dad, or even your spouse: *You need to grow up. C’mon, act your age.* In general, it’s not good to be thought of “as a baby.”

But as He so often does, our God turns upside down what natural human beings would expect. Today, Jesus points us to children, to little children, to babies brought to Him and says: **The kingdom of God belongs to such as these.** So on this Christian Education Sunday and always, let us and our children **be such babies.**”

I bet you can picture it: Jesus, sitting there with his

arms wide open, welcoming the children, or the Lord tenderly holding a little child on his lap. But don't forget an important detail: the adults, the parents who brought the children to Jesus: **People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them.**

Jesus does NOT say **the kingdom of God belongs to all little children.** But only *such as these*, that is children who are brought *to* Jesus.

Children, just like anyone else, do not naturally belong to God's **kingdom** of believers. New born babies may look sweet and innocent, but God tells us in no uncertain terms they have sinful hearts that separate them from God. The Psalm says: **Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me** (Psalm 51:5). Another verse observes: **Every inclination of (the human) heart is evil from childhood** (Genesis 8:21).

Inside every human being, including the most innocent looking baby is a sinful, selfish heart that does not naturally trust in God but is eager to rebel against the perfection God requires. Think about it. You never need to teach your children how to talk back, to lie, or selfishly shout *that's mine*.

Yes human hearts are naturally corrupt, evil in God's holy sight, deserving eternal death. Only God can forgive such sinful hearts and call them to faith in Him through the saving work of His Son, Jesus Christ who lived and died for the sins of the world. So the Lord spoke through the prophet: **I will give you a new heart...** (Isaiah 36:26).

This means it is absolutely vital that just like the **babies** in our reading, we need to bring children to the Lord. Only He can turn sinful children of Adam into believing children of God who have forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus.

But how will this happen? How can we today bring children to Jesus for Him to **“touch them”** with His blessing?

One answer stands right here in the front of church. The baptismal font reminds us how little children are still brought to Jesus' welcoming arms in the Word and water of baptism. In baptism, God washes sinful hearts clean and gives new life through Jesus' saving work, just as the Bible says: **baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the body but the guarantee of a good conscience before God through the**

resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' own words about baptism teach us bringing children to Him is not finished at baptism, but is to continue as we teach them His Word: **Go and make disciples... baptizing them... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

Through the Bible, the Word of God, the **Scriptures that testify about** Jesus, children are again held in the Savior's arms so that their faith remains alive and growing.

This makes Christian education in all its forms so important and so wonderful. This is why we have called Mrs. Mose to serve the children of our preschool. This is why we have called our teachers at our Peace School, to assist parents in **bringing** their children to Jesus in His Word.

This is why we support Christian schools downstairs, at Stonehaven, at Lakeside and Luther Prep and in our synod schools, schools where Jesus and His Word is the foundation for every class and activity. This is the reason for Sunday school, catechism class and teaching and modeling Bible truths to our children and grand-children in our homes.

Christian education is how we as a church still carry out Jesus words: **Let the little children come to me.** Therefore, with the faith and strength God gives us, let us continue to support Christian Education so that the children of Peace and many in our community will **be such babies**, children brought to Jesus and blessed with living faith in Christ.

But notice Christian education, is not just for children. Not when Jesus tells us: **I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.** Woah! This is serious. We will have no faith, no forgiveness, no part in Jesus and no home in heaven unless we are **like a little child.**

To understand this, we need to remember what kind of **little children** people were bringing to Jesus. **People were also bringing *babies* to Jesus.** So we need to be **like babies.** So what is Jesus getting at here?

Try this. Name a famous baby who as a baby led their country to great success. Name a baby who won a great battle. Name a baby who came up with a life changing invention.

What's the matter? Can't come up with any? No surprise. Babies are not known for great accomplishments. Babies can't even feed themselves, clothe themselves or clean themselves. If a baby is to go somewhere you must carry them. If a baby is to be safe, you must protect them. Babies are helpless and utterly dependent. And to an extent they know it. That's why they cry. That's why they reach out their arms to mom or dad.

That's how we **receive** God's **kingdom** like a **little child**. We recognize we are completely helpless and need to wholly depend on God to rescue us. His law that reveals our sin makes us drop any notion that we can do anything to save ourselves, for all we do always falls short of the perfection God deserves.

Then, like a little helpless baby, look to Jesus for everything. See it is the Lord who carries us, feeds our souls and saves us with His life in our place, His death on the cross, His victory over the grave and the promises of life, peace and forgiveness He gives us through them.

The hymn, *Rock of Ages* talks about what it means to **receive God's kingdom like a little baby**: *Not the*

labors of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands...All for sin could not atone; Thou must save and thou alone. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.

Oh but that's so unnatural to the old sinful part of us that always wants to say: *but isn't there something I have to do, don't I got to do this, don't I need to do that...* And that's why adults need Christian Education too. That's why we need to be regular in worship, to read the Bible, to come to Bible class, so that the Holy Spirit will teach us the most critical lesson of Christian Education: Christ and Christ alone saves us. Forgiveness of sins, life with God, heaven, these are all His undeserved gifts. **Be such babies**, who *helpless, look to Jesus for grace.*

The Apostle Peter gives us one more important point about being babies, when by the Spirit he wrote: **Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation** (1 Peter 2:2). The more we grow in God's Word, the more we will be alert to the devil's lies and traps that would take us from Jesus. The more we will also be prepared to eagerly lead little children to Jesus welcoming arms rather than hindering them by words, actions and examples that could lead them away from Jesus.

At the end of the day, Christian Education is not about our doing, but about our **receiving** Jesus' life giving Word. Yes, we will come to hear His Word, pay attention in worship and listen to our Christian teachers in school. Yes, we will give of our wealth, time and abilities to make Christian education happen. But the whole reason to do so is that we and our children will see Jesus in His Word.

Then, together with them, we will rejoice as Jesus welcomes us in His arms, feeds with His forgiveness, clothe with His Holy life lived in our place, and wash us with His blood, the blood of God shed on the cross to wipe away our every sinful stain. By God's grace, let us always **be such babies**, carried in Jesus' arms all the way to His heavenly joy! Amen.

Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught. Amen.