



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Mark 10:13-16

Mother's Day, May 10, 2020
English Standard Version

“Young and Old”
The 30th Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled
“The King and His Cross”

Welcome to Potomac Hills and Happy Mother's Day. I hope this is a good day for you. This is our 9th week meeting all over Northern Virginia as a church distributed and I'm glad you've joined us this morning. So, before I start, please turn in your Bibles to **The Gospel of Mark, chapter 10**, and listen carefully as I read our Scripture passage for today.

Mark 10:13-16

“And they were bringing children to Him that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” ¹⁶ And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them.”

*The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God
Let's pray ...*

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. We ask You this morning to give us the grace to **hear and understand** words that seem more like common sense to most of us. And yet, if we're honest, we live in a day and age when children are seen and not heard, where many are hurting and traumatized, where many more are simply disregarded, and where the biggest hindrance to children coming to Christ ... is adults. So, this morning, help us to see how Jesus highly values children and uses them to teach the rest of us what it really means to follow Christ and how to receive the Kingdom of God like a child. Thank You that today we're learning once again from John Mark, a follower of Jesus, as he brings us the earliest eyewitness account of the life of Christ. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, **help us see Jesus**, for in His name we pray, amen ... and amen.*

INTRODUCTION: The Age Conversion Quiz ¹

I want to start today with a quiz.

Let me ask you, each of you, to think of that time when you came to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. When you started a personal relationship with Him? When you received Him into your heart? When you received and rested upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel? When you were converted? And any other way of saying ... When you became a Christian?

Think of when that happened ... for you.

How many of you came to Christ ...

Before you started school ... ? (Go ahead and raise your hands)

Before you finished 5th grade ...? (Keep your hands up)

Before you finished 8th grade ... ?

Before you graduated from high school ... ?

Before you graduated from college ... ?

Before you hit the ripe old age of 25?

Okay, you can put your hands down now. I couldn't see them anyway. Why did I ask those questions? Well, I ask because 19 out of every 20 believers today ... became believers before they were 25. **95%** of the church **around the world** ... came to Christ before the age of 25. If that isn't justification enough for children's ministry and youth ministry, I don't know what is.

If we were to read the biographies of some of the great men of God throughout church history (sorry, ladies, there just aren't that many biographies of great women of God prior to the 18th century – no good reason for that), anyway, we would see that a great number of them came to Christ at an early age.

Jonathan Edwards was eight years old at conversion.

Matthew Henry was eleven years old.

The great Puritan writer, Richard Baxter, was six.

1 Statistics come from a Gallup Poll commissioned by the Southern Baptist Foreign Missionary Society.

The Prince of Preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was around 12.

Count Van Zinzendorf, a leader of the Moravian Church (which was one of the greatest missionary churches of all time) comprised a covenant of commitment to Christ that he drew up himself and signed ... at age 4. And today, we come to the passage where Jesus says, “*Let the children come to Me.*”

I think that if I could travel at multiples of the speed of light, past countless yellow-orange stars, to the edge of the galaxy, then swoop down to the fiery glow located a few hundred light-years below the Milky Way, and if I could then slow down and observe, close-up, new stars bursting forth from their foggy cocoons — in all my stellar journeys I would never see anything **as great a wonder as a baby’s birth**. And I’ve been blessed to see five of them.

The stars of the universe are temporal, but a soul is eternal. When the stars melt, that soul will continue to exist. The height of the wonder of a baby’s birth is that the tiny newborn is the apex of creation because he or she is created in the image of God. **Genesis 1:27** says, “*So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.*” And that means, among many things, that a child’s soul has a delicate moral sensibility that can, through grace and regeneration, ultimately conform to the likeness of Jesus Christ. No angel can rival a child because no angel is created in the image of God.

Children are masterpieces from the hand of the God, and it’s no surprise that the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, was a lover of children. The New Testament sparkles with accounts of His love as He celebrates the delight of a mother on giving birth (**John 16:21**), the gentle love of a father who cuddles his children (**Luke 11:7**), the parental love that listens to a child’s every request (**Matthew 7:9-11**), and His use of children as spiritual examples.

Many of Jesus’ miracles involved children — the nobleman’s young son (**John 4:46-54**), the demonized “only son” of the man at foot of the Mount of Transfiguration (**Mark 9:14-29**), and Jairus’ daughter, to whom Jesus tenderly said, “*Talitha koum!*” — “*Little lamb, arise!*” (**Mark 5:41**). Jesus, as man and God, genuinely loved children, and we should too.

In the last three years, we’ve baptized 18 covenant children in this church, and our Sacrament of Baptism begins with a joyous line from the psalmist’s praise of children: “***Children are a gift of the LORD.***” This is a concise expression of the age-old regard that God’s covenant people have had for children. **Psalm 127:3-5a** says, “*Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!*” These words are **beautifully corrective** in a culture that so often views children as an inconvenience. So let’s look at what Jesus taught in today’s passage ... and the first thing we see is that ...
vs. 13, 16: THE CHILDREN ARE BROUGHT ²

Here in **Mark 10**, we see that Jesus was a natural with children, and that the parents’ instincts were right ... starting at **verse 13**, “*And they were bringing children to Him that He*

2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from my sermons, “What Jesus said about Children and Faith” 9/15/02, and “Difficulty in the Kingdom” 3/16/14, both preached here at Potomac Hills. And the sermons, “Children in the Arms of the Loving God” by Dr. Mike Milton, Provost, Erskine Theological Seminary, Due West, SC, www.preaching.com; “Christ and the Children,” by Dr. Frank Barker, Pastor Emeritus, Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, AL. And the books, Encounters with Jesus by Dr. Richard Phillips, pages 119-134; Preaching the Word: Luke, (Volume Two) by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 197-202; Preaching the Word – Mark (Volume Two) by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 54-60.

might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ... ¹⁶ And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them.”

The Greek makes it clear that these children were infants, babies in the arms of their parents. Jesus’ touch apparently involved the act of blessing. This was in keeping with a classic Jewish custom dating back to the time of the patriarch Jacob, who laid his hands upon the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh and blessed them in **Genesis 48:14**. Proud parents held out their precious children to Jesus, who took them in His arms. Placing His hand on their heads, and lifting His eyes to heaven, He pronounced a blessing. And it seems that Jesus thoroughly enjoyed these opportunities to bless the babies.

A number of cheerful families probably stood waiting, chatting, with little ones in arms and other children scurrying around. But the fun was about to abruptly cease. The disciples were having a few words with the people, and some were moving off. The Twelve apparently did not approve of the parents’ bothering Jesus with all these crying kids. The disciples’ motivations are not entirely clear. At best they were protecting Jesus from what they deemed as interruptions or unnecessary pressure. At worst they saw the situation as a waste of time. But whatever their motivation, Jesus used their intervention to give some of His most penetrating teaching and most often quoted words. He did not talk about His love for children (as beautiful as that was) or about parenting or about blessings or even about the spirituality of children (though there are some wonderful implied insights that I am going to bring out when we get to the application).

Rather, He spoke about the kind of people who enter the kingdom of God. The context around this passage leaves little doubt about this. A few weeks ago, Pastor Wang showed us how Jesus used children as an example, **Mark 9:35-37**, “*And He sat down and called the twelve. And He said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”* ³⁶ **And He took a child** and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, He said to them, ³⁷ “*Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.*”

The late NYU Professor Neil Postman was a prolific author, educator, and cultural critic. Some of you may be familiar with him this through his seemingly prophetic books, Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology (which was written in 1992), or more likely, the popular 1985 book, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business. These books foresaw the coming impact of entertainment and technology on our culture long before any of it actually happened, written long before the Internet took over our lives.

A lesser known, but equally important work of his was **The Disappearance of Childhood**. In that book, written almost 40 years ago, Postman, not a believer himself but a non-practicing Jew, showed that childhood, as my generation knew it — the enchanted, protected 1950s Walt Disney-like innocence — was something that **didn’t exist** before Jesus. Postman’s thesis was that the whole idea of “**childhood**” is a Christian concept that took over the West when Martin Luther’s Bible was published. Postman said that children in the world, apart from Jesus and the teaching of the Bible, are second-class beings, if not worse. History bears him out. He believed that the true mark of childhood is **the protection of children** from images and ideas **that are adult secrets**, as he calls them. But the **word-centered** world that was created in the Reformation ... has been replaced by an **image-centered** world that is telling secrets far too

soon. Therefore, our children grow up too soon, thus his title, **The Disappearance of Childhood**.

The lesson here is that we, all of us as a church, are to **guard** our children, and **assist** our parents in the Christian nurture of their children in the Name of Jesus. As we heard two weeks ago, in **Mark 9:42** Jesus said, “*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.*”

And in next week’s story, Jesus makes the contrast between **these children**, entering the Kingdom by **believing**, and **the rich young ruler**, who was trying to enter the Kingdom through his own **performance**. And so, children are held up as symbols of **the ideal entrants** into the kingdom — **models** for all adults who hope to get into God’s kingdom. **Small, insignificant, weak, humble** people are the kind of people who get into the kingdom. Jesus teaches us two things here. We enter the kingdom by child-like **being** and by child-like **receiving**.

And that’s what we see next ...

v. 14: CHILD-LIKE BEING³

“But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”

Jesus did not say that the kingdom belongs to the children He was holding, but **“for to such”** — those who are like these children. What is the quality of **being** for children? What is the ontological (“the study and meaning of being, or existence”) that is distinctive in a newborn? ... **Helplessness!** Jesus has in mind here the objective state that every child who has ever lived has experienced — namely, **helpless dependence**. A newborn, naked, with flailing hands and feet lifted toward the sky, is a heart-wrenching profile of **helplessness**. And unlike any other creature, its **helplessness** extends for years. No child would survive its early years without the help of other people.

Dr. Eduard Schweizer, Professor of New Testament at the University of Zurich, wrote, *“But this is the reason they are blessed — just because they [the little children] have nothing to show for themselves. They cannot count on any achievements of their own — their hands are empty like those of a beggar. Jesus enlarges the promise to include everyone. With an authority such as only God can claim, He promises the Kingdom to those whose faith resembles the empty hand of a beggar. Such faith is possible because they have no achievements of their own nor any conceptions of God which can intrude between them and God.”*

Every child born into the world is absolutely, completely, totally, actually **helpless**. And so it is with every child who is born into the kingdom of God. Children of the kingdom enter it **helpless**. One of my favorite hymns is **“Rock of Ages”** written by Augustus Toplady. And he expresses this truth beautifully in the hymn ...

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress:
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.*

³ Parts of this section are adapted from The Gospel According to Luke, Volume Two by Dr. Joseph Fitzmyer, page 1194. Dr. Schweizer quote is taken from his book, The Good News According to Mark, page 207.

If you would enter the kingdom, this is the way you come. **Helpless** ... like a child. But then Jesus continues, and He tells us that not only do we need child-like **being**, but we also need

...

v. 15: CHILD-LIKE **RECEIVING**

Jesus' teaching reached its high point in an authoritative declaration that moved from the requirement of child-like **being** to child-like **receiving**, verse 15, "*Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*" So, what are the elements of such child-like **receiving**? Well, the first one we would probably call ...

- **Unmitigated Trust** ⁴

We see such **trust** in a baby who stands on his father's hand high over his dad's head — and smiles proudly. This may sometimes be misplaced trust, but it is nevertheless complete and sincere. Whenever you see fathers and little kids, you see them getting swung around, tossed in the air, swung down between their legs, over their backs, whatever ... like basketballs. And what do the kids say? "*Do it again, Dad, do it again.*" Why? Because **they trust their dads**.

Completely, totally, without reservation, absolute **trust**. Children **trust** others for **everything** — food, lodging, and the arms of others who carry them about. Regarding **trust** in God, the child's ability to believe has never been wounded by wicked suggestions or burdened with superstitions or perverted by falsehoods. These little ones are the opposite of the skeptical theologians, the scribes and Pharisees, whom Christ battled from **Mark 2:6** all the way to **Mark 10:2**, which we saw last week. And there's more battles to come! Those who receive the kingdom like a little child have the saving element of faith. They have belief plus **trust**. They believe in Jesus, but it is more than a mere intellectual assent — they **trust** Jesus for everything to do with salvation and life.

The late PCA Teaching Elder and Theologian Dr. R. C. Sproul makes a helpful comment about this. He says, "*So often this passage is interpreted to mean that Christians are always to have a child-like faith, in the sense that we ought to keep our faith very simple, and not allow it to be encumbered by diligent study of the Word of God. However, there is a difference between a childlike faith and a childish faith. A childish faith chooses to remain immature, but a childlike faith, the kind that Jesus calls for, is a simple, confident trust in, and dependence on our heavenly Father. ... when it comes to our salvation, we must have a childlike trust in God's mercy and grace, or we will miss the kingdom of God.*" So, if the first element of child-like **receiving** is unmitigated **trust**, the second one is ...

- **Untutored Humility**

Children do not engage in the various forms of adult pride. Unlike the Pharisees, little children are not proud of their virtues, like the famous scene in **Luke 18:11-12**, "*The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'*" A child does not battle self-righteousness in coming to Christ — a child cannot say, "Lord, I have been constant in my attendance for many years. I have sat at the Lord's Table for half a century. I give a lot of money to missions."

Furthermore, a child, and in particular a small child, is free from the pride of knowledge. He has no learning, no degrees to pile up before the cross. Intellectual conceit is impossible.

⁴ Dr. Sproul quote is taken from his book, *A Walk with Jesus*, pages 293-294.

Children are teachable too. They receive the gospel without proposing amendments to it. Because children have not developed the pride of adulthood, they readily repent. Little ones will readily cry over a wrong done. Their unseared consciences have left their powerful moral instruments intact — and they are utterly miserable over their sins. Untutored **humility** leaves a young soul open to receiving the greatest of gifts. So, we have unmitigated **trust** and untutored **humility**, then the third element of child-like **receiving** is ...

- **Untarnished Receptivity** ⁵

Children know how to **receive** a gift — they simply take it. At their first birthday, they are not sure what a gift is. As two-year-olds, if they have siblings, they understand well enough. And by the time they're three, they are really into **receptivity**! The wrapping paper flies everywhere! As one writer explains: "A little child takes its food, its parents' love and protection, because they are given, without beginning to think of whether it deserves them or whether it is important enough to merit such attention. So must we all receive God's kingdom and enter into it." The soul that **receives** the kingdom is **profoundly grace oriented**. It is open to **the unmerited favor of God**. And thankfully, untarnished **receptivity** is quickly followed by ...

- **Unabashed Love**

Children easily return **love** for loving gifts. Enthusiastic hugs and kisses and multiple "Thanks" are showered on the giver. What do you like most at Christmas, opening your gifts, or watching kids open theirs? Watching little kids, they do so much better at **receiving** gifts than adults do, and while we say "thanks," they throw themselves in your lap with a huge hug. And spiritually, the Apostle John teaches us, **1 John 4:19**, "*We love because He first loved us.*" Unabashed **love** is the province of those who **receive** the kingdom as little children. If we're coming to the Kingdom with child-like **receiving**, then we need to have the child-like **trust, humility, receptivity, and love**. However, while Jesus was speaking to adults ... and these are lessons for adults ... we have to ask, but what about the children? And that's what I want to focus on now. The teaching that I next stress from this text is this: Disciples of Christ should ...

APPLICATION: Remove the Hindrances ⁶

... that keep children from coming to Jesus. Let me say that again, "Disciples of Christ should **remove the hindrances** that keep children from coming to Jesus." Back in **verse 14**, we read, "*Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*" Sadly, it's all too easy for us to **hinder** children from coming to Christ. We can be faithful followers of Christ and **hinder** them. We can be leaders in the church and **hinder** them. Children are idealistic; and they think things ought to be the way they ought to be. And when they're not that way, and they see hypocrisy or they see something not being done as they feel it should be done, it can be a **hindrance** to them spiritually.

The disciples **hindered** the children and Jesus rebuked the disciples and invited the children. The lesson is clear — "Disciples of Christ should remove the **hindrances** that keep children from coming to Jesus." To apply this teaching to our situation I would like to spell out

⁵ Part of this section is adapted from *According to Luke* by Dr. David Gooding, page 295.

⁶ The Application is adapted from the sermon, "*Let the Children Come to Me*" by Dr. John Piper, Pastor Emeritus, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, 9/16/84, www.desiringGOD.org.

Let me recommend the booklet, **How Our Children Come to Faith** by Rev. Steve Smallman, the former Pastor of McLean Presbyterian Church.

four **hindrances** that we should try to remove from our children in this church and the children in our neighborhoods.

The first one comes directly from the text. The other three are based on our experience together in ministry to children, both at home and in church.

1. The first hindrance to children is something in us adults, namely, **pride**.

There's a good reason that Matthew, Luke, Peter, and James all give us some version of **Matthew 23:12**, "*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*" Earlier, Matthew wrote, **Matthew 18:4**, "*Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*" So it's especially fitting that Mark should give us a story about children that ends with the words, "*Truly, I say to you, whoever **does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.***" I think these two sentences mean virtually the same thing. "*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled*" has the same outcome as saying, "*whoever **does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.***" So the childlikeness in view here is **humility**.

But this story in **Mark 10** is not just about adults who should be child-like in the way they **receive** the kingdom; but **Mark 10** is also about the children who were being brought to Jesus for His touch. So, to see what Jesus wants to teach us we need to find out how the children relate to the child-like — or not so child-like — adults. In **verse 13**, there were parents bringing their infants to Jesus. The disciples rebuke them. Jesus rejects this rebuke and encourages the parents to bring their children to Him. Then, as if to warn the disciples, He says, **verse 14**, "*Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*" In other words, when Jesus sees a disciple hindering a child from coming to Him ... He sees someone in danger of **missing the Kingdom** due to pride.

If you're **receiving** the kingdom **like a child**, then you won't do anything to **hinder** other children from coming to Jesus. But if you're trying to enter the kingdom some other way than by child-like **receiving**, then you'll probably be a **hindrance** to other children. If you are not child-like toward God, then you may consider children to be beneath you and not worth your time.

So there's an awfully close connection between your own **humility** and your ability to bring children to Jesus. The great **hindrance** to effective ministry to children is **pride**, and the great **gift** for effective ministry to children is **humility**.

But there are many other **hindrances** that we put in the way of the children as they come to Jesus. Most of these are in some way or other the result of pride even though they don't look like it on the surface. Let's look at some of them, and how we might work to remove them. After pride, we see that ...

2. The second hindrance to children is **parental unbelief**.

When a child's parents are not believers the child is at an extraordinary disadvantage. There's no one at home to bring him to Jesus. There have been children in our church and many in our neighborhoods who live in just this kind of hard circumstances. There are two ways to remove this kind of **hindrance**. One is to try to reach the child and lead him to Jesus even if the parents don't want to come along. Many parents are willing to let someone else take their children into the presence of Jesus. If they'll let us, we should do it.

But it would be far more effective for the child and beneficial for the parents if we could lead the **parents** into the presence of Jesus at the same time. If the **unbelief** of the parents is the

chief **hindrance** to the children, then the best way to remove the **hindrance** is to seek the conversion of the parents. So you can see how closely related the ministry to children is to the larger ministry of outreach.

3. The third hindrance to children is the lack of deep and accurate theology among parents and teachers.

It takes **as much**, if not **more**, understanding of Biblical doctrine to teach it to children than it does to teach it to adults. If you understand a thing well, you can usually make it plain for ordinary people and children. But if you are fuzzy in your own understanding, you will generally be overly complex in your explanation. Therefore, a significant **hindrance** to the salvation and the growth of our children is the weakness of our **own grasp** of the full range of Biblical truth and the unity of the whole counsel of God. The best way to remove this **hindrance** is to help the adults of our church learn more about knowing God and growing in their understanding of His character and ways.

I am overwhelmed at what children can absorb and retain when they're repeatedly and systematically and progressively instructed in the great doctrines of the Bible. After all, one of the promises parents made at each of those 18 baptisms we've had in the last three years was *"Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon the Grace of God, that you will endeavor to set before him a godly example, that you will pray with him and for him, **that you will teach him the great truths of the Christian faith**, and that you will strive, by all the means that God provides, to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?"* This isn't simply good advice ... most of us **have already promised** to do this.

4. And finally, the fourth hindrance to children is the lack of showing up.

If the ministry of Sunday School is crucial in the lives of our children (as well as our adults), then we are reaching a point at Potomac Hills where the lack of commitment to bring your children will be a significant **hindrance** to all our children and the children who are yet to come. We have approximately two-thirds of our kids coming three out of four weeks on average, but there are about a third of our children whom we don't see at all.

Let me say that I think we have a good, solid Sunday School program. We have a content rich curriculum from Great Commission Publications that teaches a lot of Bible and Doctrine at an age-appropriate level. Great Commissions is the joint Christian Education publishing arm of the PCA and the OPC. And we have some exceptionally good teachers. I have no doubt that I'm a little biased, but if you want your children to grow spiritually, I think you should make every effort to have them in Sunday School. If you consider how much screen time they get, then having them in Sunday School for 45 minutes a week is the **least** we can do. But then you should be asking them what they did and what they learned in class. And the same for the sermon – this is the time to teach them how to pay attention to the sermon and learn at least **one thing** from it. Keep your kids involved, don't make **not showing up** a **hindrance** to them coming to know Jesus more every year.

So the application of this passage is easy to understand but hard to do — and that's simply that Disciples of Christ should **remove all hindrances** that keep children from coming to Jesus. We should remove the **hindrances** of pride, parental unbelief, the lack of deep and accurate theology among parents and teachers, and the lack of showing up so that all of our children can grow in Christ. I believe that God has sent our Director of Children's Ministry, our Sunday School Teachers, Children's Church and Nursery Coordinators, and our Youth Pastor for

a very crucial season of spiritual growth. If we pray for them and cooperate with them, God will do a mighty work to bring children to Himself and raise up a new generation of disciples who put their hope in the Lord. **It's that important.**

Our eternal reward depends upon whether or not **we enter** the kingdom. And kingdom entrance first depends on our child-like **receiving** of Christ ... **in helpless dependence.** We must not think a child cannot come to God until he's a man, but a man cannot come until he's like a child. Jesus' words are true ... in **John 3:3**, we read, "*Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*" And in **Matthew 18:3**, we read, "*and [He] said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*" Because if you think you can depend on yourself to get into heaven, the Bible teaches that you are sadly mistaken. If it depends on you, then it wouldn't be grace, and as Mark has taught us all along ... It's **all** of grace ... from **beginning** ... to **end**. And all God's **children** said, "**Amen.**" Take a moment to pray, and then I'll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have given us a King. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Our Father in heaven, these are personal issues that we've dealt with today. You know our hearts, you know our marriages, you know our children, you know our parenting. You know what we're doing well and what we're not. You know where we lack humility and how hard we find it to receive the Gospel with child-like faith. Father forgive us for acting like we know better. Instill in us child-like humility and child-like love to receive You and belong to Your Kingdom. So, Lord, please continue to work in each of us this year as we live with Mark, a follower of Jesus, as we hear what he hears, given to him by eyewitnesses of Christ. Thank You for this story of amazing grace. Thank You for the glimpses we get of Jesus in His love towards children and His grace towards sinners like us. Teach us to respond with a child-like trust in You, and in Your Word, and in this Gospel, to draw us ever closer to Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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2 Timothy 1:4-5

"As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."