

Luke 18:15-17

A Model and A Message

Image Church // Inverted Kingdom Vol. 2 / Radical Week 3

Introduction

Well, good morning Image Family I hope you're doing well!

If you have your bibles, grab them and turn to Luke 18...

We're on this journey with Jesus through the back part of Luke as we finish out the book...

Jesus is currently on His way to Jerusalem... And on the way, we have these teachable moments that Luke records...

And each of them confronts us with a challenging reality designed to reorient our perspective around God's Kingdom which looks very different from the sinful and broken world that we live in...

See, through Jesus, we get a glimpse into the heart of God, what He's about, and what His Kingdom will be like...

What Jesus does, is He comes to be our salvation, but in the process, He also models for us how saved people live... And He gives a new perspective on life that He calls us into as His followers...

And this morning we're going to watch as Jesus continues to frame out this new perspective in light of who God is...

So let's pick up in Luke 18...

Luke 18:15-17

15 People were bringing infants to him so that he might touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. **16** Jesus, however, invited them: "Let the little children come to me, and don't stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **17** Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

So what Jesus does here, and I love how He's always doing this, but He takes a real-life situation and turns it into a significant spiritual reality...

- **BTW:** this is what discipleship looks like according to Jesus!

And in this teaching moment happens through what He says **and** by what He shows us...

Don't miss that because there are some really important implications that we need to see from this encounter with Jesus...

We're going to look at this in **two parts**...

The first part has to do with **our position before God**, and the second part has to do with **the heart of God**...

So, let's look at the first part... Our position before God

Here's the first thing that we see when it comes to our position before God...

1. Jesus levels the ground

In verse 15 People were bringing infants to Jesus...

- Sweet and awesome...
- But the disciples don't see it this way...
- They step in and police the situation...

The disciples rebuke the people bringing their kids to Jesus!

Why? They probably thought that Jesus had more important things to do... Jesus didn't need to be bothered by these kids... They were just getting in the way, they were taking up time...

- **Culturally speaking**, these kids were low on the social scale, they existed on the fringes of society because they brought little to it... Jesus certainly Jesus didn't need to bother with them...

Here's what I want you to see, the disciples' rebuke of the children coming to Jesus reveals something deeper, it reveals that **the disciples believe only certain people are worthy of access to Jesus...**

There are some of you that have suffered under the weight of that... you've never felt worthy to come to Jesus, you've never felt put together enough, or you don't know enough, or feel religious enough to come to Jesus...

Some of you just feel too far gone and there's no way Jesus is for someone like you...

There's so many people that have suffered under the weight of this...

- And Christianity's been something that's not appealing because people don't feel worthy or capable...
 - I'm not good enough... Jesus isn't for me...
- The reason is because their understanding of Christianity has been skewed by people who claim to be Christ followers...
 - Unattainable standards..
 - Rules and judgement of others

Jesus break all of that down right here as He looks at the ones His disciples had sought to reject, the ones that had looked down on, *the sideliners of society*, who brought nothing to the table in any capacity morally or societally...

And He says, **let come to me, the Kingdom belongs to them too...**

In that statement Jesus levels the ground revealing something important...

There's no hierarchy when it comes to our access to God!

IOW: Access to Jesus isn't conditional...

- It's not based off of your age or stage...
- It has nothing to do with your status or social standing, whether your good or not...
- It's not conditional on your ability to be religious...

Listen to me, there's a standing invitation from Jesus to **anyone** who would come, His arms open wide **with nail pierced hands** ready to receive all who come to Him in faith!

- Do you know that to be true for yourself?
- Do you know that to be true for others?

Here's the second thing that I want you to see when it comes to our posture before God...

2. Jesus shows us what our hearts should look like

Jesus says in verse 17: **17 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."**

What Jesus does here is give us a tangible example of what our hearts should look like...

Here's the thing about infants... *Can we just be real...* They bring nothing to the table...

Like the extent of their needs is insane... *You even have to read their minds!* **BTW:** no one prepares you well for that!

- *I had friends that were looking for the manual that they thought the hospital was going to send home with them...*
 - Hospital you have all the help... I milked it...
 - But then they send you off and expect you to figure it out!

But here's the thing, Jesus wants us to see that there's a lot that we can learn from infants when it comes to the **the reality of our hearts**...

Let me give you 3 quick things we can learn from infants that we need to learn to embody...

1. Humility

2. Trust

3. Dependence

There's an old Hymn that says it best:

Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace:
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

Jesus' point here is that like infants we need to come to Him in humility, dependance and trust...

- Is that true for you?
- Some of you are not where you would like to be spiritually and it's probably because you're not embodying these things...

*Alright, I told you there was 2 parts to Luke 18:15-17, let's look at the second part where we see **the heart of God** through what happens here...*

The heart of God

What we see here is God's heart for the most vulnerable in society, these children...

Let me show you how this plays out...

1. Jesus advocates for the most vulnerable

These infants and children are being pushed away, overlooked and neglected...

- The disciples are attempting to allow others to come to Jesus at the expense of these children...

And rather than stand by and allow it to happen Jesus says to His disciples **verse 16: Let the little children come to me, and don't stop them...**

Now, there's lots of places where we could apply this, but I want to focus where Jesus did here, on children, particularly as it relates to their most vulnerable state: **in the womb**.¹

Today is actually **National Sanctity of Life Sunday**, where we reflect on the tragedy of elective abortion in our society...

And listen, before you get triggered... I know this is an issue that often creates division...

I need you to understand that I'm not about culture wars or political agendas... I don't believe that the pulpit is a place to lobby for politics- I will never use this platform to sway you politically, but I will always use it to speak biblically...

So, my goal here isn't to push you toward a political party, frankly I don't care where you are on that... My goal is to unite us around the Christ!

I want to call us to be about the things that He's about, and Jesus is clearly concerned about the most vulnerable... Which means we should be too...

So it's important that we reframing the issue of abortion... **It's not a political issue** but as a **biblical issue**...

¹ Thought adapted from JD Greear Luke 18:15-17 sermon

And let me say this, I know that there are some of you that may be here and have lost a child due to abortion. Your pain is real, and we want you to know that Image Church is a place of hope, and healing not of condemnation. We want to be here to walk with you in your hurt...

You need to know that God forgives you, He loves you, and we love you. You don't have to carry guilt and shame any longer, or face the journey of healing alone.

Jesus primary purpose in coming to earth, you see, was not stopping abortions; it was to die for abortion-committing sinners. And that means the heartbeat of our message here is not the legislation of a culture of life; **it's the offer of new life in Jesus.**

Let me be very clear: If you've had an abortion: Jesus stands before you this weekend not with a finger pointed in condemnation but with arms opened wide in mercy...²

The beauty of the gospel is not where you have been, but where God wants to take you...

- Some of the people I know that have had abortions and been transformed by the gospel no stand strongly against it... That's redemption at work!

Here's the thing, Since 1973, there have been over 63 million abortions...

In Iceland, which many consider a progressive utopia, *the **abortion rate for children diagnosed with Down syndrome now approaches 100 percent***. In the United States, 90 percent of preborn humans diagnosed with Down Syndrome are terminated.³

² Thoughts in this section adapted from JD Greear, *Does prayer change the mind of God?* Jan 21, 2018.

³ Caroline Mansfield, "Termination Rates After Prenatal Diagnosis Of Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida... Prenatal Diagnosis 19:9 (1999): 808-12

Down Syndrome is only one example... **Genetic testing** in the womb has made it possible to discover potential future complications leading to the termination of so many children...

- This hits my family on a personal level...
- Braxton has a rare genetic disease...
- *Braxton* in the hands of another family may have been terminated...

And genetic testing is just **one** of the causes that leads to aborting a child...

In fact, *in 2018 the leading cause of death worldwide was abortion with 42 million victims...*⁴

For some they sit back and say, yeah but are thoes really lives? YES!

- **Psalm 139** tells us in no uncertain terms that a baby in the womb is a human being made in the Image of God, a soul that God knows...

I agree with Pastor Thabiti Anyabwile who says, *It's staggeringly clear that the largest scale injustice--the most morally outrageous thing happening in our society today--is the killing of children in the womb...*⁵

Family would we be to the unborn what Jesus was to us...

- Jesus was a voice for us when we were voiceless...
- Jesus came to our defence when we were defenceless...
- Jesus advocated for us when we couldn't advocate for ourselves...

Application: As Christians we are called to advocate for the most vulnerable...

- One of the ways we do that is advocating for the lives of the unborn...

⁴ Thaddeus Williams, 3730.

⁵ Thabiti Anyabwile, "Speak Up for the Vulnerable," preached at SEBTS on January 25, 2019.

BTW: We're going to be dropping a podcast this week talking more about this issue of abortion...

At the end of the day, we want to help Children come to Jesus, and part of that is ensuring their lives...

- Family we must be united on this biblical issue together and we must speak to it and stand against it with no uncertain terms...

But listen to me, it doesn't stop there...

We don't want to just be pro-birth, we want to be pro-life!

The way we say it is that we want to be pro-life **Womb to tomb...**

This is where the church has missed in so many ways over the years...

- *Appeal...*

Again, there's a lot of places we could take this, but I want to stay in line with our text specifically focusing on children...

That leads me to the second thing that we need to see here...

2. Jesus models caring for the most vulnerable

Jesus models tenderness, compassion, and kindness towards the most vulnerable... He welcomes them to himself... We want the same be true for us...

You say what does all of this look like?

***Adoption**

Interested, talk to Pastor Bryson...

Feels like this is jumping off the deep end of the pool...

***Foster Care**

- Careing for children who are in a compromising situation at home... Brining them into your home while things are worked out in their home...

Could be short term or long term care...

*Another option is: ***Foster respite care...***

Maybe not ready for any of thoes yet?

- Join a care team - Care team orientation right after church, lunch provided
 - There are so many opportunities to serve besides becoming a foster parent...
 - Help provide support to those who are fostering through care teams...
 - Even if you are not sure how you can serve, go to the orientation and learn more about ways to serve. There are so many opportunities to be apart of what God is doing through our foster care ministry...

Here's the other thing, when it comes to caring for the most vulnerable it's not only limited to these two spaces... There are others, on in particular that I want to hold up is what we do here every weekend...

Image Kids

Remeber... ***We want to help Children come to Jesus, and part of that is ensuring their lives...***

we don't do child care... We do kids ministry where we seek to partner with you to make disciples of your kids!

- We don't overlook your kids, we want to bring them to Jesus!

We want you to see and prioritize it! I want us to reframe how we think about Image Kids...

- It is our #1 mission field!
- We want to raise up a generation...
- It takes a village!

Push for being involved...

One other place I would hold up is:

Student ministry: We currently don't have this functioning on all cylinders but we have a deep desire to see this ministry flourish...

Some of you need to step up into this!

So here's some questions I want you to consider:

- Are we being like the disciples in anyway by hindering people from coming to Jesus?
- What are the things that keep the most vulnerable from Jesus?
- How can we model Jesus to the most vulnerable in our society?

Here's how we want to close out this morning, I want to tie this together for you...

We won't be able to have the heart of God if we don't assume the right position before God... Will never desire these things...

Humility

Trust

Dependance

This is where we have to start... some of you need to start here for the first time..

Others of you need to reorient... You're not where you want to be, you see gaps...

Conclusion [VAMP]

Adoption video...