

RECEIVING HEAVEN'S TOUCH



A Chorus of Children's Voices
Karen Harkema

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. 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. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Mark 10:13-16

This is the proof text which is used to explain infant baptism. "*Suffer the little children to come unto me.*" Of course, Jesus wasn't baptizing babies. He was putting his hands on them and blessing them. Taking them up in his arms and blessing them. These mothers believed that if this man, who healed the sick and spoke such words from God, would touch their little ones, they would be touched by heaven---a touch that would follow them for the rest of their lives. Who wouldn't want this for their little child?

Of course, the disciples couldn't see the point of all this fussing over little children. After all, Jesus always taught grown-ups. Never once do we see him teaching children...singing little songs... putting on puppet shows. No, Jesus was busy laying heavy stuff on adults, shaking things up wherever he went, giving fits to the big-shots in Jerusalem.

So the disciples were not at all pleased, when these mothers started swarming Jesus with their little ones. "Go away! We don't have time for blessing children!"

"Wait a minute!" says Jesus. "What are you guys doing? "

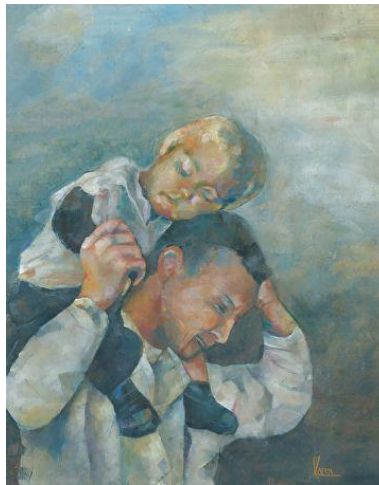
"Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Jesus was blessing the little ones. But he was also putting out a strong message to adults, including us.

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child shall not enter it."

So how do we receive the kingdom of God like a child? I'm an adult. I have an adult mind. I have adult problems. How do I lay all that aside and become a child?

The thing about a child---a little child that has not yet been infected with adult vanity---is that this little child is satisfied to be totally dependent on its parents. Trusting. Its heart is open. This child is not trying to prove anything. Its tender little heart has not yet hardened.



Lift them High

No wonder its angels always behold the face of the Father in Heaven!

"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child shall not enter it."

For us to come back to that child-like trust, that tender heart, we need to do some unloading. If we want to enter God's world, we have to get rid of some baggage.

To enter God's kingdom like a child here are four pieces of adult baggage we're going to have to dump, and keep dumping, until they no longer control us....

First, we need to unload our misguided confidence in our own importance.

Here's Mike the Millionaire. He's a decent chap. He took over a small business and turned it into a real profit machine. He knows all his employees by name. He gives them turkeys at Christmas. Mike is generous. Soft-spoken. Yet when Mike walks into a room you can feel his

importance. You can feel it! In his business, Mike's the guy in charge. And this "guy in charge" atmosphere goes with him wherever he goes.

Most of us do not have Mike's wealth, or his record of business success. But even those of us who regard ourselves as shy and inferior, have a lot more of Mike in us than we think. For instance, when we're ignored...or walked on....or talked down to, we bristle, just like Mike does. "Who do they think they are! Don't they know who I am?"

To repent and become like a child before God we need to unload this misguided confidence in our own importance. What are we trying to prove? I don't need to find my worth in the admiring eyes of people. If I know that God knows me, what more do I need?

***My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation.***

Psalm 62

Second, to become a child before God we need to unload our misguided confidence in our own smarts.

Look at Geraldine the Genius. Geraldine is really, really smart! And nobody knows this better than Geraldine. She can do astonishing things with a computer. She can speed-read books. She has an answer for every problem.

We may not have Geraldine's brains. But when we look at all the fools around us, we give ourselves a pretty good grade. And, like Geraldine, we seem totally unaware of how little we really know about anything.

We won't find our way into God's World until we come down to size and begin to see how vast is our ignorance of the things that matter.

Arrogance. Presuming to know the meaning of life, when we know nothing. We need to unload this misguided confidence in our own smarts.

***Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden part, thou shalt make me to know wisdom.***

Psalm 51

Thirdly, to become a child before God we need to unload our misguided confidence in our knowledge of God.

Over here we have Theodore the Theologian. Theodore knows all about immanence and transcendence, free will and predestination, prevenient grace, Docetism, Gnosticism, etc.

Theodore has God's ways figured out. He knows why people have to suffer, and how it's all going to shake down in the end.

Yet, for all Theodore's theological knowledge, his personal life is a mess. He knows all about God, but he hasn't figured out how to get along with his wife and kids.

Now we may not claim to know all the stuff Theodore knows about God. But we do have our opinions about life after death, divine justice, why bad things happen to certain people. And when these opinions don't quite line up with what Jesus says, we become theologians in our

own right. We know how to take the edge off a command of Jesus that doesn't suit, and brush it aside.

If we're serious about living in God's world, we need to take off our theologian's hat and confess that we know no more about God's ways than that little child in Jesus' arms.

***How unsearchable are his judgments,
And his ways past finding out!***

Romans 11:33

Finally, to become a child before God we need to unload our misguided confidence in our own goodness.

I have a friend who underwent nothing less than a supernatural transformation of his life. He met the Lord Jesus, began to follow him. He continues as a disciple of Jesus to this day. But there was a time, before this miracle happened, when this man seemed unreachable. "Look," he would say, "I'm okay with God. My good deeds outweigh my bad. I'm basically a good guy."

Who of us has not been afflicted with that disease? A misguided confidence in my own goodness....."My good deeds outweigh my bad." Give me a break!

Sooner or later, in his mercy, God sends each of us a dose of reality. Something happens in our life that wakes us up. Suddenly we discover that...

...we aren't as important as we thought we were.

...we aren't as smart as we thought we were.

...we don't know God as well as we thought we did.

...and, (heaven forbid!) we aren't quite the saint we thought we were.

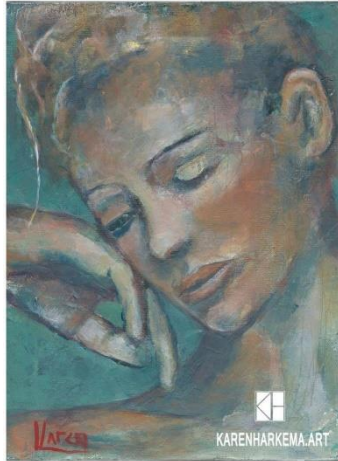
Once we get that message, we may be ready to humble ourselves and become that little child in Jesus' arms. And when we do, the door to God's world opens. We walk in, not as the vain adult we've been for so long, but as a little child, stepping into the Father's house.

***Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive
the kingdom of God as a child shall not enter it."***

It sounds so simple.

Yet it takes most of us a lifetime to figure it out.

But once we figure it out, it only takes a split-second to submit to the word of the Lord, asking him to help us to truly repent and become a child before him.



Be Still and Know

Here's a prayer that's always answered, when it is prayed with an earnest heart:

Lord, help me to empty myself of myself and become a child before you!

That prayer is the doorway to God's world.

A doorway we need to come back to every day.

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

