"THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM"

Matthew 18:1-4

7-22-2018

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-2

***The key to greatness in God's Kingdom is to have certain qualities of a child.**

I. <u>ENTRANCE</u> into the Kingdom Requires a <u>CHILD-LIKE FAITH</u> (v. 3)

A. A child is <u>teachable</u>
(Children have an openness to be taught)

B. A child is <u>dependent</u>
(Children have a deep sense of dependency)

C. A child is <u>trusting</u>
(Children have an eagerness to trust)

II. <u>GREATNESS</u> in the Kingdom Requires <u>CHILD-LIKE HUMILITY</u> (v. 4)

"THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM"

Matthew 18:1-4

7-22-2018

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-2

***The key to greatness in God's Kingdom is to have certain qualities of a child.**

I. _____ into the Kingdom Requires a CHILD-LIKE _____ (v. 3)

A. A child is _____
(Children have an openness to be taught)

B. A child is _____
(Children have a deep sense of dependency)

C. A child is _____
(Children have an eagerness to trust)

II. _____ in the Kingdom Requires CHILD-LIKE _____ (v. 4)

"THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM"

Matthew 18:1-4

7-22-2018

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-2

V. 1

This question came about after the disciples had a private dispute among themselves as to who was the greatest among them (Mk. 9:33-34; Lk. 9:46).

"The kingdom of Heaven" - a synonymous phrase as *"the kingdom of God."*

The question they are asking is: "When God sets up His Kingdom, who will be the greatest?" "When the kingdom of Heaven comes to earth (*"Thy kingdom come"*) who will rank highest? Who will be most noble? Who will be endowed with the most authority and privilege?"

To illustrate His points, Jesus takes a little child and places him right in the middle of the disciples.

V. 2

"Little child" - *paidion* - a young toddler; a child old enough to walk and respond to simple instructions (like this child did to Jesus).

Jesus often used object lessons to teach spiritual truth.

Christ's placing a child in their midst and teaching that they must be like children must have shocked the proud, self-confident disciples. Such a lesson no doubt shook them to the foundation of their being.

***The key to greatness in God's Kingdom is to have certain qualities of a child.**

I. ENTRANCE into the Kingdom Requires a CHILD-LIKE FAITH (v. 3)

"Verily" **-** truly; assuredly

Jesus uses this word to show the guaranteed trustworthiness, fidelity and importance of the truth He is about to give.

"Converted" **-** to be turned around; to be changed over from one state to another.

The need for conversion should tell us something is desperately wrong with the situation we are in prior to conversion.

The ***"conversion"*** to which Jesus speaks (in this context) is a conversion into a humble child-like faith.

"Except ye be converted" **-** This statement addressed to the disciples implies that they were not yet converted; they were not yet citizens of the kingdom; they were not yet saved.

Personally, I do not believe they were true believers until after Christ's resurrection.

Just prior to His betrayal and death, Jesus said to Peter, *"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren"* (Lk. 22:32).

"Become as" **-** Jesus is not calling on us to become children (to somehow revert back to childish ways); but He is saying we need to be as children in a certain respect.

There are certain qualities children have that we desperately need in order to enter God's kingdom.

The disciples wanted to know who was the greatest in the Kingdom. But Jesus warned them that apart from child-like faith and humility, they would not even enter the Kingdom.

Prior to this account, Jesus had said that no one could enter the Kingdom who was not *"born again"* (by the Spirit) (John 3:1ff). Now He says that no one can enter the Kingdom who is not like a little child.

"The fact that a person must *"enter the kingdom"* assumes he is born outside of it under the rule of Satan and that he is not naturally a heavenly citizen" (MacArthur, p. 96).

Jesus said in Mark 10:15: *"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive (welcome, to take to oneself) the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein"* (cp. Luke 18:17).

A. A child is teachable
(Children have an openness to be taught)

Small children have an inquisitive mind that naturally seeks to learn everything about the world around him. They constantly ask questions. Like sponges, they absorb information without effort.

Children can readily accept new concepts and make corrections to previously held erroneous ideas.

Since small children have the greatest capacity for learning new things, they also are most vulnerable to being led astray. Hence, Jesus gives severe warning about stumbling one of these *"little ones."*

There are many who are so convinced that they have the truth; that they have "arrived," and they are so complacently comfortable with where they are that they are not open to seeing defects in their lives and religion. They are so convinced that they *"see"* that no one could challenge them about the blindness in their lives.

The Pharisees condemned themselves with such delusion: *"Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."*

Are you open to learn God's plan of salvation; are you will to have your ideas (about salvation) corrected?

Small children are not "set in their ways" like many older folks are.
The most dangerous position to be in is to “think you know it all” To be content with your wisdom and thinking. To NOT be open to learn and grow in your understanding.

A person is in a sad predicament who is not open to God's instruction.

God calls such a person a "fool." *"Fools despise wisdom and instruction"* (Prov. 1:7).

Our prayer should always be: "God, make me teachable." "May I never be so proud (arrogant) that I cannot be rebuked and corrected."

B. A child is <u>dependent</u>

(Children have a deep sense of dependency)

A small child depends upon his parents (or guardian) for everything.

Without even giving much thought to it, our children depend on us to protect, feed them, cloth them, shelter them, teach them, guide them, etc.

Children are "Dependent." As you fill out your taxes, you will not that they are listed on the form as "dependents."

Children know that they are in a position of <u>need</u>. They readily recognize that they cannot make it on their own. That spirit of "independence" may be in teenagers, but it is not in little children.

A little child simply submit to the care of his parents, relying on them for all that he needs. He knows he cannot meet his own needs and has no resources to stay alive (MacArthur, p. 99).

Whether you realize it or not, you need God for everything (both for this life and the life to come).

Jesus taught a lesson on dependency in His teaching about the "vine and the branches." (John 15).

What are you depending on for your salvation?

Are you depending on your righteousness? (Is. 64:6; Titus 3:5) (Ro. 10:3 - *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about toe stablish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."*)

Or on Christ's righteousness? (II Cor. 5:21).

Sometimes God allows afflictions, trials and tribulations to keep us <u>dependent</u> (Psalm 119:67 - *"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."*) (II Cor. 12)

C. A child is <u>trusting</u>
(Children have an eagerness to trust)

What does a child have that we need to have? A willingness to <u>trust</u>
(willing to trust the security and safety provided for by another)

When a parent says something to a child, the little child does not suspect a lie, he takes what you say literally and believes you are being truthful.

A child trust his parents to take care of him.

They entrust their lives into our care (EX: How as a child I trusted my father to drive safely and to bring us to our desired destination).

A child's readiness to trust is evident by the response of his little child Jesus summoned to Himself. The child responded to Christ's call (v. 2).

The back of our dollar bill says: "In God we trust." But it would be safe to say that more people put their trust in that green piece of paper than in the living God.

Because children are more trusting also makes them vulnerable to evil people who would like to take advantage of their trusting spirit. This is why Jesus severely warns against causing a little one to stumble (v.5)

However, we are to be open and trusting when it comes to God and what He reveals to us through His Word about Himself and His Gospel.

Paul wrote to Timothy, saying: *"We trust in the living God."* (I Tim. 4:10).

I Tim. 6:17 - *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."*

What a release! What a joy! What peace comes when one has confidence in the faithfulness of God's promise. What solace comes to the heart of one who learns to totally *"commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator."*

Paul had such assurance, as evident by his words: *"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."*

II. GREATNESS in the Kingdom Requires CHILD-LIKE HUMILITY (v. 4)

Someone who is proud has an over-estimation of one's self (thinks more of themselves than is right).

We are often so confident in our: --intelligence
--strength
--achievements

Many will be in Hell because of pride.

They were too proud to admit:
1) their sinfulness
2) their need for forgiveness
3) their utter helpless
4) their need for Jesus Christ

"When pride cometh, then cometh shame" (Prov. 11:2)

"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

"A man's pride shall bring him low" (Prov. 29:23)

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (James 4:6; I Pet. 5:5).

Jesus does not deny or refute that there are degrees of greatness in God's kingdom. Rather, He confirms that there are degrees of greatness and informs us as to the secret to being the greatest in the Kingdom.

The greatest people in God's kingdom were the humblest people while on earth:

How did their humility make them great?

1) Their humility kept them from trusting themselves and made them rely on God to work in a through their lives (their humility kept them on their knees)

2) Their humility allowed them to unashamedly preach Christ

3) Their humility allowed them to perform lowly service for God's glory (SEE: John 13:4-5, 12-17) (Mt. 23:11-12 - *"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased: and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.")*

Conclusion:

Are you like a little child when it comes to faith and humility?

- Are you like a little child when it comes to faith?

  Who are you trusting for your salvation? Is it Christ alone? If not, then you have never been saved.

- Are you like a little child when it comes to Humility?

  God cannot "get through" to proud people. He humbles them first.

  The secret to greatness is humility! Someone who is humble enough to serve others;

  When the disciples were bickering over who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus gave this lesson:

  <u>Mark 10:42-45</u>
  But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.