

Luke 9:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,

Analysis

Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart (εἰδὼς τὸν διαλογισμὸν τῆς καρδίας, eidōs ton dialogismon tēs kardias)—Christ's divine knowledge penetrates beyond words to the inner reasoning of the heart. The verb eidōs (perceiving) indicates full, intuitive knowledge, not mere observation. He sees their ambitious calculations before they voice them.

Took a child, and set him by him (παιδίον, paidion)—Jesus uses a living object lesson. In ancient society, children had no social status, legal rights, or political influence. They represented powerlessness and dependency, the opposite of greatness the disciples sought. By placing the child beside himself (παρ' ἐσυτῷ), Jesus identifies with the lowly, previewing His teaching that receiving the least is receiving Him (9:48). The kingdom's hierarchy inverts the world's: the child, not the celebrity, stands next to the King.

Historical Context

First-century Greco-Roman culture viewed children as incomplete adults lacking reason and virtue. Jewish tradition valued children as covenant blessings but still placed them at the bottom of social hierarchy—women, then children, then slaves. Jesus's radical elevation of a child as the model disciple would have shocked His audience, challenging fundamental assumptions about honor, status, and kingdom citizenship.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus's choice to use a powerless child rather than a theological lecture teach about how kingdom truth is often communicated through embodied, concrete realities?
2. How does Christ's ability to perceive the thoughts of your heart before you speak them affect your approach to prayer and self-examination?

Interlinear Text

ο	δὲ	Ἰησοῦς	ἰδὼν	τὸν	διαλογισμὸν	τῆς	καρδίας
G3588	And	Jesus	perceiving	G3588	the thought	G3588	heart
G1161		G2424	G1492		G1261		G2588
αὐτὸ	ἐπιλαβόμενος	παιδίου,	ἔστησεν	αὐτὸ	παρ'	ἔαυτῷ	
him	took	a child	and set	him	by	him	
G846	G1949	G3813	G2476	G846	G3844	G1438	

Additional Cross-References

John 16:30 (Parallel theme): Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Revelation 2:23 (Parallel theme): And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Hebrews 4:13 (Parallel theme): Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Psalms 139:2 (Parallel theme): Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Psalms 139:23 (Parallel theme): Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

Jeremiah 17:10 (Parallel theme): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Matthew 9:4 (References Jesus): And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Luke 5:22 (References Jesus): But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

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