

Mark 9:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

Analysis

Jesus 'took a child, and set him in the midst of them' (λαβὼν παιδίον ἔστησεν αὐτὸν μέσῳ αὐτῶν), using object lesson to teach humility. In first-century culture, children had no social status or rights—completely dependent and vulnerable. Jesus then 'took him in his arms' (ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτόν), showing affection and valuing what society dismissed. This demonstrates kingdom values inverting worldly hierarchies. The Twelve argued about greatness (v. 34); Jesus presents a child as model. True greatness in God's kingdom means embracing lowness, dependence, and service. Children can't achieve, produce, or claim merit—they simply receive. This illustrates justification by faith: salvation comes not through achievement but humble reception of God's grace. Jesus' physical embrace of the child demonstrates God's tender care for the weak and lowly.

Historical Context

Ancient Greco-Roman society viewed children as unformed adults without legal rights or significant social value. They couldn't own property, make contracts, or hold positions. High infant mortality rates meant emotional distance was common. Jesus' counter-cultural valuing of children was revolutionary (Mark 10:13-16). Rabbinic Judaism valued children as future Torah students but prioritized adults. Jesus' use of a child as spiritual model shocked His disciples. The Greek *pайдіон* (παιδίον) refers to young children or infants—completely powerless and dependent. Jesus' teaching redefined greatness: not power, achievement, or status,

but humble dependence and service. This became foundational Christian ethics inverting worldly values (Philippians 2:3-11).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' use of a powerless child as a model challenge contemporary obsessions with achievement, status, and influence?
2. What does Jesus' physical embrace of the child teach about God's tender care for those society considers insignificant?

Interlinear Text

καὶ λαβὼν παιδίον ἔστησεν αὐτοῖς ἐν μέσῳ αὐτοῖς
And he took a child and set him in the midst him
G2532 G2983 G3813 G2476 G846 G1722 G3319 G846

καὶ ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτοῖς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς
And in his arms him he said him
G2532 G1723 G846 G2036 G846

Additional Cross-References

Mark 10:16 (Parallel theme): And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Matthew 18:2 (Parallel theme): And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,