

Matthew 19:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Analysis

Jesus rebukes disciples: 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven' (Greek: ἄφετε τὰ παιδιά καὶ μὴ κωλύετε αὐτὰ ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με, 'permit the children and do not hinder them to come to me'). 'Suffer' (ἄφετε) means 'allow, permit.' Disciples tried blocking children from Jesus, viewing them as unimportant. Jesus invites them, declaring 'of such is the kingdom' (τοιούτων γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία) - the kingdom belongs to those with childlike faith. This affirms children's spiritual capacity and models humility, trust, and receptivity required for salvation.

Historical Context

In ancient culture, children had no social status. Disciples reflected cultural values by dismissing children as unimportant. Jesus' embrace of children was radically countercultural, affirming their worth and spiritual responsiveness. This teaching grounded infant baptism practices (though some dispute application) and emphasized evangelism of children. Early Christian communities welcomed children in worship, contrasting with pagan practices of infant exposure and neglect. Jesus' treatment of children demonstrated kingdom values inverting worldly hierarchies.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Why did disciples try to prevent children from coming to Jesus?
2. What does Jesus' welcome of children teach about kingdom values and who belongs?
3. How should churches demonstrate Jesus' priority of welcoming children?

Interlinear Text

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν Ἄφετε τὰ παῖδιά καὶ μὴ
G3588 But Jesus said Suffer G3588 little children and not
G1161 G2424 G2036 G863 G3813 G2532 G3361

κωλύετε αὐτὰ ἐλθεῖν πρός με τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν
forbid them to come unto me G3588 for of such is
G2967 G846 G2064 G4314 G3165 G1063 G5108 G2076

ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν
G3588 the kingdom G3588 of heaven
G932 G3772

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 18:3 (Kingdom): And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

1 Corinthians 14:20 (Parallel theme): Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

Mark 10:14 (Kingdom): But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Matthew 11:25 (References Jesus): At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

