



This Sunday we finished our series on prayer in Luke 18. As with the previous two Sundays, we noted that Jesus' focus seems to be more on our *hearts* – on how we *approach* God in prayer – than it is on the content, style or length of our prayers.

### 1 – Children can come to Jesus (v15-16a)

The first thing we saw was that Jesus valued children. Though he may have needed rest, he welcomed these infants to him, despite all their noise, mess and dirt, and blessed them. Where the disciples told the parents off for bringing their children, Jesus told off the *disciples* for trying to send them away. And Jesus didn't just think that children were important. He felt that they were worthy of his time, and he accepted their young expressions of desire, interest and trust in him, though of course they later would need to come to a saving faith.

This is a wonderful message for the children in our church! It is also an encouragement to us as we seek to love and serve them, and a warning that we must not dismiss them and their young faith.

### 2 – You can come to Jesus like a child (v16b)

This scene is not just about Jesus' welcoming of children into his presence, it turns out; it is about the kingdom of God and the people who will enter it. Though we are not to behave like a toddler, or know only what a toddler would know, we are to come to him like children, Jesus says. We are to receive God's kingdom as a child receives a gift. For the kingdom is *God's free gift* to us – we do not deserve it, we cannot buy it for ourselves, and we will never be able to pay him back for it.

This is a great relief as the world demands so much of us when it offers us things. We do not need to hide our sin and shame, fearing that God will reject us. He will change us, but he invites us to come to him as we are, for he has paid in full.

### 3 – You must come to Jesus like a child (v17)

Not only *can* we receive God's kingdom like a child, but we *must*, Jesus reveals. The only way to come to Jesus is to come like a child. Those who come clutching onto their achievements, backgrounds and experiences will not be allowed entry.

Though we may find it hard to not slip back into viewing ourselves before God according to how well we think we are doing as Christians, this, like last week's passage, is a salvation story. If we are Christians, we *have* come to Christ like children and we *are* receiving his kingdom. Hallelujah!

We concluded by noting that Jesus does not ask us to give up anything he has not given up himself, and as we come to him with nothing he promises us everything – eternity with him in his glorious new creation.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. How in our church life do we demonstrate the value children have before God? Is there anything we could do to show this value even more? How do you personally feel about being part of a church with lots of children?
2. What is it in the approach of a child that Jesus commends? How can we learn to come to Jesus like that?
3. Why is it such a relief that we can come to Jesus like that? How does the world teach us that we should come to new social situations, and how is the way Jesus tells us to come to him very different?
4. What things are you tempted to grab hold of or cling onto? What might God be trying to prise out of your hands in this season?
5. How, in the gospel story, do we see Jesus give up the things that we might be tempted to cling onto that he might save us? How is this a help?
6. Where might we go in Scripture to see what great promises Jesus makes to those who come to him empty-handed?