

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

2/14/10 **“Jesus and Children” Mark 10: 13-15**

The Gospel of Mark tells us a well-known episode of Jesus. Parents brought their children to Jesus to be blessed. But Jesus' disciples stopped the children and told them not to bother their teacher. Jesus was too important a person to mingle with children.

When Jesus saw this, he became indignant with the disciples. He told them, “Let the children come to me.” Then he uttered the well-known words, “You cannot enter the Kingdom of God, unless you accept it as a child does.”

What does this episode tell us?

In those days, only the adult male was considered fully human. As in any male dominated society, women were regarded as inferior to men.

What about children? They were truly nobodies. Before they became teenagers, they were treated as burdens on society. Young children were not mature enough to cook for the family, till the land, or work in the market place.

In general, in the first century Palestine, small children were not objects of human affection.

No wonder the disciples tried to chase the children away from Jesus.

For the disciples, Jesus was not a person whom children could approach freely. He should be revered, not loved. He should be put on a pedestal, not brought down to the level of children.

Jesus rejected the disciples' thinking. “You cannot enter God's kingdom, unless you accept it the way a child does.”

What does God's kingdom mean here?

It is like the open table with Jesus as the host, to which everyone is invited. Socially high and socially low, Pharisees and tax collectors, the healthy and the sick, and, yes, children, too, sit next to each other to break bread.

The kingdom of God means the brotherhood and sisterhood of human kind under the fatherhood of God. In God's kingdom, everyone is treated as precious and important.

Today Jesus is asking us a question, “Which are you? Are you one of those who tried to stop the children from coming to me? Or are you the children who are running toward me?”

Let us run toward Jesus like those children. Come to think of it, running toward Jesus is what worship really means.

Rest assured. If we run toward Jesus, he will welcome us with his arms wide open. He will embrace each and every one of us. He will hold us tight and never let us go. Never.

Thanks be to God.