

Kurigasawa Baptist Church, November 9, 2025

Children's Blessing Service Sermon

Sermon Title: "Those Near Heaven"

Matthew 18:1-5

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Today's service is offered as a "Children's Blessing Service." Earlier, we invited the children connected to our church to come forward. We prayed for their healthy growth, and I prayed that God's blessing would be upon the children and their families. The fact that children are given to the church, that little ones are given to us—their very existence is a great joy and a blessing. Children hold the future and possess unlimited possibility. While we pray for their growth and development, we also receive energy and vitality from them. On a personal note, my wife and I were blessed with our first grandchild this past June. Every day, I eagerly receive photos of the little one. I can truly embrace the growth of this infant as if it were my own.

Reading Genesis chapter 21, we find that Abraham and Sarah were given a son named Isaac. At this time, Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Isaac was born under the extraordinary circumstances of what would be considered an "ultra-elderly birth" by any standard. This was the accomplishment of the promise God had made to Abraham. In Genesis 15, the Lord God spoke to Abraham, saying, "[Look up at the sky and count the stars, if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be.](#)" Isaac's birth was the accomplishment of this promise. This Isaac would eventually grow up and reach the age of weaning (around two years old, perhaps). According to the same Genesis chapter 21, "[On the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.](#)" On that day, everyone in the household, including the servants, ceased their work and sat down to a celebratory feast to give thanks for Isaac's growth. In our country, this might be comparable to the Shichi-Go-San celebration. However, the scale of Abraham's celebration as recorded in the Bible far exceeded Shichi-Go-San. Not only the family but the entire household, including all the servants, gathered together to celebrate Isaac's weaning. Today's Children's Blessing Ceremony is an event of such great joy.

Psalms 127:3 in the Old Testament contains these words: "[Behold, children are a gift from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward.](#)" (Common Translation Bible). The Bible tells us that children are gifts from God, a 'reward' or "gift" (reward; Eng). Children are not the property of their parents. Rather, they are received from God, and parents are to be good stewards of these children, who are God's gifts, teaching and raising them to be pleasing to God's will. Nurturing the next generation of children to be pleasing to God's will is an important task entrusted to each family and church. I know a couple who, for various reasons, became foster parents to children unable to be raised by their biological parents. They took in and raised four children together. This couple were members of my former church, and the father was an American missionary. The four children—two boys and two girls—all have different biological parents. Yet they live brightly and resiliently, supporting each other as family members. The eldest daughter enrolled at TCU (Tokyo Christian University), studying and working part-time to prepare for her future. Over ten years ago, when the family lived in Sumida Ward, they once attended Sunday worship together as a family. That day, a major church cleanup was scheduled for the afternoon, but all four children stayed behind and worked diligently to help with the cleaning. Watching them, I was struck by how remarkable these children were, a family bound together by God. Even within families connected by blood, things don't always go smoothly, yet these four children lived harmoniously, helping each other. This was possible because of their parents' prayers.

Today's Scripture reading is from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 18. Here, we find the scene where the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "[Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?](#)" Though it says "kingdom of heaven," this term is referred to as the kingdom of God in the other Gospels. It is the world where God rules over

all. However, the disciples brought into this kingdom of God the same hierarchical structures found in earthly nations. It seems they were already debating who would hold the second-in-command position when Jesus, as Messiah, became King, overthrew all earthly rulers, and established God's kingdom. Yet, the very fact they posed such a question shows the disciples had no understanding whatsoever of what the kingdom of heaven truly was. If anyone seeks some reward in heaven—that is, if they seek to gain status or honor—it is completely beside the point. For the kingdom of heaven is where those who abandon themselves and dedicate themselves to serving God enter. As long as a person considers themselves the most important, they are turning their back on heaven. To enter heaven, one must change their heart and go in the opposite direction of their previous way of thinking. Here, “change their heart” means “change their way of thinking.”

So what does Jesus mean here when He says, “Become like children”? The Lord Jesus clearly recognizes in children, in little ones, the qualities befitting the people of God's kingdom. What are these qualities? Why does becoming like children grant entrance into the kingdom of God? The reasons are as follows.

First, children depend on others to live. They do not place their center within themselves. Very few children think they don't need parents or that they can live alone. Starting with obtaining the necessities of life, children depend on others to survive. Children need people who love them, accept them, and provide the education necessary for them to eventually stand on their own in society. Summarizing all this, children cannot grow without someone's help. In fact, this is exactly the same in the realm of faith. If a person relies only on themselves, believing they need no one else's strength and that their own power is sufficient, they will not seek God. But a Tower of Babel built that way would surely collapse easily. Let us not forget that our very existence, the fact that we are alive and sustained, is under God's rule.

The second characteristic is that children are small and lowly before God, as evidenced by their stature. Incidentally, in verse 1 of today's passage, which asks, “Who is the greatest?”, the Greek word translated as ‘great’ is an adjective meaning “large.” In the earthly world, people compare themselves to others, striving to make themselves larger, wealthier, or attain higher positions, seeking to be highly valued. But in heaven, all are equal. Yet verse 10 of this chapter 18 states: “[See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.](#)” Here, the Lord Jesus declares that even the smallest person has an angel assigned to them. Before God, every soul is utterly equal.

The third characteristic of children is their ability to believe in something simply. Children don't earn money themselves, yet they believe that when they return home, their parents will provide love, comfort, and whatever they desire. Furthermore, when children travel with their parents, they may not know how they'll reach their destination, but they trust their parents will safely take them there. They place 100% trust in their parents. Isn't such trust in God something adults need as well?

The kingdom of God spoken of by the Lord Jesus is a message calling us to shift our focus—not relying on our own strength or trying to save ourselves, but casting ourselves into God's rule and committing everything to Him. It is a message saying, “Place your salvation in God's hands; live with God at the center.” It says that little children can do this. Let us become those who receive the kingdom of God like children. God blesses those who humble themselves and become small like this, and gives them great grace and blessing.

Let us pray.