

"A Little Child Will Lead Them"

If only fathers qualify to become "elders in every church" (Titus 1:5-6; Acts 14:23), how could Isaiah predict that "a little child will lead" men of beastly nature, men like wolves, leopards and lions (11:6; 65:25)? Why did Jesus say that "the greatest" person in the "kingdom," the "church" (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:1), is like "a little child" (Matthew 18:4)?

A "dispute arose among" the twelve apostle (Luke 9:46). Jesus asked them, "'What were you discussing along the road?' They remained silent, for in the way they had discussed among themselves who was the greatest" (Mark 9:33-34).

In an object lesson, the Master Teacher "sat down, called the twelve," and "took a little child, placed him in their midst, took him into his arms" and said, "Indeed I assure you that, unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mark (9:35-36; Matthew 18:3). Are there baptized people who have never entered the kingdom? Yes, said Jesus, if they have not "become like little children" (Matthew 18:3).

Jesus explained, "Therefore, he who humbles himself (tapeinosei heauton) like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4). Baptism is the door of admission into the "one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13), which is "the church" (Ephesians 1:22), which is "the kingdom" (John 3:5), but one of the prerequisites to baptism is a child-like humility (Matthew 18:3-4).

What is child-like humility? When a person of any age, male or female, of any skin color, "humbles himself" (Matthew 18:4), he rises "not far from the ground" in "lowliness of mind" with "a deep sense of" his moral "littleness" (Thayer, 614). He has "a modest opinion" of himself, bringing down his "pride" (Ibid.)

Humble people, far from bragging on themselves, always say, "We are unworthy servants" (Luke 17:10). They never take credit for anything they do, but simply say, "We have done what we ought to do" (Luke 17:10).

Jesus gave an example of a man so humble he "would not even look up to heaven" as he prayed, "but beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). One can say of that man, as Jesus said of another, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34).

—Hugo McCord