

Let the Little Children Come

By Joyce Catherwood

Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-15; Luke 18:15-17

My daughter proudly clasped a red poppy in her chubby little hand, so anxious to give it to Jesus. As I got closer, I could see other parents already gathering. Then I overheard the disciples harshly rebuking the moms and dads who had brought their children to be blessed. Everyone looked duly chastised as they were told that Jesus had many more important matters to attend to. Their loud, unfriendly tone actually startled and frightened some of the little ones, who began to cry.

Had I misunderstood what Jesus was like? I had previously observed his respectful and loving interaction with both young and old, especially the powerless and others regarded as insignificant.

This was a huge letdown for me. Our society doesn't validate children, especially fatherless little girls, but I had expected Jesus to be different.

I turned to go back home. But I stopped in my tracks when I heard Jesus rebuke the rebukers! He told them to let the little children come to him, and not to hinder them because the kingdom of God belongs to them! He said, "Whoever does not receive the

kingdom like a little child will never enter it."

As the disciples backed off, parents hesitantly stepped forward with their children. Jesus knelt down and reached out to a wobbly toddler with a runny nose and tattered clothes. The playful little boy pulled away from his father's hand, ran to Jesus and jumped into his arms. With an enormous grin on his face, Jesus stood up. Within minutes, he was surrounded by giggling children, touching his hair, tugging on his sleeve, crawling on his lap. Then Jesus took each child, one by one, cradling the infants and lifting the others high in the air before blessing them.

And as for my own little bundle of joy, well, we waited our turn and Jesus accepted the bright red poppy she offered him, even though it was a little crumpled by then. He picked her up and for a few treasured moments they marveled at the beauty of her little gift, both deciding it was their favorite flower. Then he blessed her.

The littleness of these children contrasted sharply with the well-meaning, but overbearing disciples. These precious ones, so used to being ignored, pushed aside, even mistreated, not only received a blessing and validation from the humble Messiah, but were lifted up as tender examples of the very essence of the kingdom of God. ☪