

8.54

Luke 18:15–17—“Suffer the Little Children”

A story told in all three Synoptic Gospels portrays Jesus scolding his disciples when they try to turn back people who want to bring their children to him for blessings. In the KJV, the memorable expression used in Jesus’s response was “Suffer the little children to come unto me” (in Elizabethan English, the word *suffer* meant “permit” or “allow”).

Text of the Gospel Stories in King James Version

Matthew 19:13–15	Mark 10:13–16	Luke 18:15–17
<p>Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put <i>his</i> hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.</p> <p>But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.</p> <p>And he laid <i>his</i> hands on them, and departed thence.</p>	<p>And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and <i>his</i> disciples rebuked those that brought <i>them</i>.</p> <p>But when Jesus saw <i>it</i>, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.</p> <p>Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.</p> <p>And he took them up in his arms, put <i>his</i> hands upon them, and blessed them.</p>	<p>And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when <i>his</i> disciples saw <i>it</i>, they rebuked them.</p> <p>But Jesus called them <i>unto him</i>, and said, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.</p> <p>Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.</p>

“Children Brought to Christ” by W. M. Hutchings (1850): The Bible story inspired a sentimental hymn written by a London printer, William Medlen Hutchings (1827–76):

When mothers of Salem¹ their children brought to Jesus,
The stern disciples drove them back and bade them to depart:
But Jesus saw them ere they fled and sweetly smiled and kindly
said,
“Suffer little children to come unto Me.”
“For I will receive them and fold them to My bosom:

I’ll be a shepherd to these lambs, O drive them not away;
For if their hearts to Me they give, they shall with Me in glory live:
Suffer little children to come unto Me.”
How kind was our Savior to bid these children welcome!

But there are many thousands who have never heard His Name;
The Bible they have never read, they know not that the Savior
said,
“Suffer little children to come unto Me.”
O soon may the heathen of every tribe and nation

Fulfill Thy blessèd Word and cast their idols all away!
O shine upon them from above and show Thyself a God of love,
Teach the little children to come unto Thee!

1. Salem = Jerusalem