The Blessing of Children

**TEXT**: **Mark 10:14-16 (ESV)** 14  But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 15  Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” 16  And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

While I’ve done a lot of traveling in my time, I have yet to take a River or Ocean cruise with Viking.

That’s maybe a sadness, since it appears they are pretty good at what they do. Indeed, the travel industry seems to be tripping all over itself to heap accolades upon the cruise giant. The Viking website tells me they have been awarded…

* .Travel and Leisure magazine has awarded them the “World’s Best” title nine out of ten years.
* Conde Nast Traveler his decided Viking,is the #1 River Cruise line in the world.,
* USA Today has said Viking is the Best River Cruise company for the last three years.

If you read travel newspapers and magazines you will be overwhelmed with awards and titles like:  “Best New River Ships,” “Best River Cruise Itineraries,” “Best Enrichment,” “Best Shore Excursions,” and “Best for First-Timers.”

Oh, there’s one other award Viking cruises has also earned. They have the strictest age policy in the travel industry. What does that mean? It means, if you aren’t over the age of 18, you can request permission to come aboard a Viking ship as a passenger… you can request it, but you aren’t going to get it.

It seems that misbehaving children have ruined the atmosphere of the ship and passengers have complained enough that the little ones no longer are going to be offered a berth. Now I suppose that’s OK for a river cruise company. Generally speaking, most people who travel on Viking are over the age of 50, and children have always been in short supply on those ships. That’s why reporters were able to conclude the new policy isn’t going to cost Viking cruises a whole lot of business.

I doubt if the same thing can be said in regard to churches who look with disapproval on their children who are not always on their best behavior during worship. Oh, I know… no Christian adult would ever SAY anything to a parent whose little one is misbehaving… but those icy stares flashed from an upset adult worshiper to a parent speaks volumes.

The end result is parents conclude they will keep their children home until they’re old enough to know how to behave. Unfortunately, the children don’t learn how to behave… they, with their parents, learn how to stay away from worship. Without children, the congregational worship service does become quiet, reverential…and the congregation gets older. All-in-all that’s a pretty poor commentary on the church which follows the Savior Who picked up the little children in His arms and blessed them. Which is why I suggest… Rather than “killer looks” we offer supportive words to our worshipping young families.

* Rather than filling up the “baby benches” with latecomers, we save them for the youngsters.
* Rather than condemning a baby’s cry, we start to think of it as training for a future choir member.

**THE PRAYER**: Dear Lord Jesus, You picked up the little children and blessed them. Grant that we, as Your followers, may have a place of worship where every sinner can find welcome and peace. This we ask in the Redeemer’s Name Amen.