

Not Far From the Kingdom

Text: Mark 12:²⁸ And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? ²⁹ And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: ³⁰ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. ³¹ And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. ³² And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: ³³ And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. ³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*. ¹

Message Title: “Not Far From The Kingdom”

This man started out as a foe of Jesus but he ended up as a friend. In the same reference in the book of Matthew, it says that he came to Jesus, tempting Him. So this man started out as an enemy of Jesus. No matter how mild we try and treat the word **tempt**, it still lends itself to being an unfriendly testing. At the same time, nothing could be more heartwarming than the way in which he responded to Jesus answer: “Master, you have spoken the truth.”

Jesus Christ has an incredible power over men's' minds. The presence of God is so irresistible that he amazingly turns enemies into friends.

Jesus has a secret key that can open the doors of human hearts. Jesus can open even the most hardened heart.

It is interesting that this scribe is half-hearted in his approach to tempt Jesus. I imagine that he was a man of superiority among his peers. He was no doubt a very intelligent man in many ways. Probably few people would want to argue with this man. It is probably for this reason that his fellow scribes selected him to be the one to do the actual tempting. The rest were way too nervous.

Sometimes men are put up to doing things by their peers that they themselves would never have ever thought about doing. So, quite unwillingly he acts as the mouthpiece of a set of people whom he half despises.

Jesus Christ is a ready reader of human hearts. He can sense a spirit coming from miles away. He can discern the inner condition without even a bit of effort. He is God!

Jesus can tell if something is being done by a person alone, or if there are others behind the scenes, pushing that person into their actions.

Jesus discerns the difference between the malicious adversary and the less guilty victim of circumstances. There have been people who have fought against precious truths who would never have done so if they had not listened to certain influencers who think nothing of making use of them. They become drawn into a false position.

The people whom they have been accustomed to lead have led them: it is too often the fate of leaders. The circle of which they have been the center and the head has imprisoned its own apparent master, and made him captive, so that he fights against that which in his heart he believes to be right. If, even now, he could be set free from his surroundings he would side with the right.

Our Master, Jesus Christ, can read our hearts and can understand the pressures under which we act.

As He reads our souls, he sees what good still inhabits our hearts. Jesus Christ wants to deliver His people out of dangerous positions. He is able to set us on the right path every day!

Let me tell you that Jesus Christ can take us out of entanglements that hold us back. He can sever us from those who make tools of us, and at the same time they sink us down to their level.

Jesus can and will lift us up to His level of excellence. Jesus wants to make us champions of all that is good and true. He wants us to go forward with Him as our Master.

We bear His cross now, but it is with the hope that one day we will wear a crown given to us by Him!

Even though the scribe first came as an antagonist and tried to tempt our Lord, yet after a while, Jesus put him into such a state of mind that he said to him,

"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Jesus said this because he saw that he answered discreetly. What did this man say to Jesus that turned things around for him? He said this: "Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

One of the greatest things going for this lawyer-scribe is that he was **frank, straightforward, and honest**. He was a scribe, and naturally he took the side of the scribes and Pharisees, but still he was not so much a scribe and Pharisee that he would follow them against the truth. In all our friend making and associations in this life, we must know where the lines are to be drawn.

He kept himself open to conviction, and as soon as the Savior had given an appropriate answer to the question, he did not sneer at him, as other Pharisees would have done, and continue to pick fresh holes in his coat, but, like an honest man, he said, "Well, master, thou hast answered rightly"; and so he separated himself from the unjust and prejudiced party for whom he had been the temporary spokesman.

At this point, the scribe did not proclaim to be a follower of Jesus Christ, yet he was fair in his assessment of Jesus. He spoke his true heart, and I am sure that it was much to the dismay of his fellow scribes and Pharisees. They must have been very frustrated with this scribe to say the least!

There is always some hope of a man who is candid, and there is even more hope still of somebody who has been placed by circumstances among the prejudiced, nevertheless he or she breaks away from bondage, keeps a conscience, preserves his eye from total blindness, is willing to see light if light is to be had, and is anxious to know the truth if the truth can be brought before him.

We can see that this man also had a sense of Spiritual knowledge. It is a tremendous error to ever think that ignorance can ever do us any good. Ignorance hurts and cripples even Christians with a long heritage of Christianity. We cannot afford it in this hour. We must be spiritually alert. To be ignorant of the ways of God is to be far away from the Kingdom of God. To be ignorant of the gospel of Jesus is to be far from the born again experience. We must be open to the revelations of God!

This man knew the law and he knew it well. He had an appreciation for the things of the Spirit.

We see that he mentions *sincere love*, in the words "to love him with all the heart." God is to be loved, not in name, not with lip language alone, but with the

heart. Yes, it will come out the mouth when we really do love Him, but it must be from the depths of the heart, the soul, and the innermost being.

Next, the scribe says, "With all thy understanding "; God deserves and demands the *intelligent* love of his creatures. He does not ask for blind love: he desires us to know something about him, and of his works, and of his claims upon us, we can love Jesus because He deserves our affection. We love to sing that song around here: You deserve our Worship, O Lord!" The understanding within the mind and heart must justify and impel the affections that follow, otherwise worship becomes haphazard and only occasional at best.

Then, he declares, "with all thy soul "; that is, with *the emotional nature*. Love God with feeling—not coolly, but with the whole force of your feeling. With emotion and expression from the heart. Love him with your soul, because soul love is the soul of love.

And then he adds, "and with all thy strength "; *intensity* is to be thrown into our love to God. We are to serve him with our might, and throw all our whole energy into worshipping Him!!!!!!

He gave us, under four heads, a description of the kind of love which the law of God requires of us—

- sincere—"with all thy heart";
- intelligent—"with all thy understanding"; emotional—"with all thy soul";
- intense and energetic—"with all thy strength." The scribe knew this, and it was very valuable knowledge.

When a person begins intelligently to grasp the doctrines of the law and the gospel, when we perceive that he is no stranger to divine things, but that he can give a reason for his beliefs, and can state them to others, we do not conclude that just because of this knowledge that person is actually in the kingdom of God, yet, according to Jesus, we may safely conclude that he is **not far** from it. Give us sincere honesty, and let that frankness be enriched with enlightenment, and we are sure that the possessor of these things is not far from the kingdom of God.

To such a person, who will say, "What must I do to be saved?", we lovingly, and boldly declare **John 3:5 AND Acts 2:38** There is nothing sweeter in life than to be born of the water and the Spirit. It is simply awesome!

Some people have not yet entered the kingdom of God because they see

themselves as unworthy, not understanding that Jesus took care of that syndrome as well:

Somebody put it this way:

My six daughters sometimes gather around me, telling me how they need shoes, money for music lessons and for many other things. Sometimes I have been compelled to say, "Go easy! I am not made out of money. We will just have to get what we can afford and go without the rest."

But I never read in God's Word where He ever told anybody, "Go easy! I don't have very much. I have already strained Myself giving to others. I cannot give as much as you ask." No, no! One of our greatest sins about praying is that we do not ask for enough. We do not take what God is willing to give. ... God forgive us our little, stingy, unbelieving prayers! ²

If you are here without everything you need from God, it is not because He is limited in ability or in resources. When you are close to the Kingdom of God, yet you have not yet fully entered, don't stop, and don't short change yourself. Press on until you are complete in Him. You can be, and He is willing to make you complete!! **He said if we ask for the Holy Ghost, that is exactly what we will receive.**

² Tan, P. L. 1996, c1979. Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : [a treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers]. Bible Communications: Garland TX