

The Kingdom of God: How Bad Do You Want In?
Mark 10:13-16

I. “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

A. January 5, 2020

1. First sermon in the series
2. Helen Lemmel and Lillias Trotter: “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

B. What might happen if we turn our eyes upon Jesus?

1. We are faced with a fundamental question: Who is this Jesus and what did He come to do?
 - a. Potential personal answers
 - (1) Guilt
 - (2) Addiction
 - (3) Brokenness
 - (4) Direction
 - b. Bible/Gospel of Mark
 - (1) How does Mark present Jesus
 - (2) How does Jesus present Himself in the gospel of Mark?
2. Jesus in Mark
 - a. Proclaimer of the kingdom
 - b. Fulfilment of OT hope
 - c. Knows His presence and mission inaugurate the kingdom
 - d. Every ministry, teaching, effort is designed to prepare and train His disciples for their future role in the kingdom of God
3. Hebrews
 - a. **Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV) ¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**
 - b. What if we take this as seriously as God intends?
 - (1) We will find in Jesus everything the ancient, inspired authors told us to expect of the Messiah, the Savior, the Chosen King over the kingdom and people of God
 - (2) If we look to Jesus we will find the Son of God, God come in flesh
 - (a) who lived in the presence of God the life humanity was created to live
 - (b) who died on the cross in our place on our behalf, taking our sins in His own body and suffering the penalty of guilt and sin that we deserve
 - (c) who was buried
 - (d) who rose from the dead on the third day just as

God's true and holy word promised He would.

- (3) If we take this seriously and look to Jesus we will find the One who not only rose from the dead but who was exalted by God to sit in the throne at God's right hand
- (4) We will find the One who will one day soon, perhaps even sooner than we think, return to judge the living and the dead
- (5) We will find the One, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the King who comes to establish His eternal kingdom once and for all in a new heaven and new earth populated by those whom He redeemed by His blood from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.
- (6) We will find Jesus the King who rules now in the hearts of his people and who will One day rule unhindered and unobstructed in all He creates.

C. The Message of the Kingdom

1. This is the message of the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation: Christ is King and He comes to establish His kingdom.
2. He will reign in the hearts of His people and one day He will establish His rule over place as well as people.
3. Message:
 - a. People, get ready, there's a kingdom coming that is not of this world
 - b. Jesus has come to prepare you for what He is most certainly going to bring about!

D. Message of Mark

1. Entry Level: social structure among disciples
2. Master's Level:
 - a. More than instruction for the moment, this is preparation for eternity!
 - b. This is training for the kingdom, when the people of God will reign and rule with Christ the King for the glory of God in the presence of God forever and ever!
3. Invitation to explore the two levels of instruction Jesus offers on this occasion with the little children.

II. Entry Level: Jesus and the Children: (Not meant to minimize importance but to secure priority)

A. Jesus and the Children in the Text

1. The parents bring their little children to Christ for blessing and the disciples turn them away.
2. The Cultural Status of Children
 - a. Children in the ancient world often existed solely for the convenience of their progenitors.
 - (1) Their value was not in their person but in their performance: the work they could do, the money they could

- generate.
 - (2) They were either an economic benefit or an economic drain, and until they could contribute to the family welfare they were often tolerated like you tolerate a calf, feeding it and housing it until it starts to give milk.
 - b. “They clearly were not presumed to be blessings in the non-Christian culture of Christ’s day.”
- 3. Jesus and the Children
 - a. Jesus rebukes His disciples and sets a different standard for them
 - b. Jesus elevates the child and the social standing of children in this text.
 - c. By extension He also elevates the forgotten, the dismissed, the marginalized, the overlooked, the under-served.
 - (1) He elevates “the least of these” and makes them a model for the greatest of these.
 - (2) But note, Jesus’ effort is not tied here to the value of the children.
 - d. His effort is tied to the value of the kingdom! He is not primarily exalting children, or human beings, as much as He is exalting the presence and power and character of the kingdom of God!
 - e. **Jesus uses an entry level occasion to provide Masters’ Level instruction!**

B. Applications from an Entry Level Perspective

1. There are some powerful applications to be made from this text before we move on.
2. It is possible, even among those who mean well, to place obstacles in the way of people whom Jesus would otherwise welcome. Don’t.
3. The failure to reach out to children and families is as much a hindrance to them as turning them away when they come.
4. There is no blessing from Christ that leaves a sinner in same condition in which they come to Christ. Jesus leaves no one unchanged, unreached, or without genuine hope in new life through God/s grace and mercy.

III. Masters’ Level: Jesus and the Kingdom

- A. Jesus and the Kingdom
 1. **Mark 10:14-15 (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.”**
 2. The kingdom of God
 - a. The rule or reign of God in the human heart (spiritual kingdom = now)
 - b. Since there is a physical people of God who undergo bodily resurrection according to the promise of God, there must also be a physical place over which God reigns (physical kingdom = not yet)
 3. The kingdom of God is where God makes everything perfect for His

people to experience His unobstructed joy in being God (to enjoy God forever)

B. How to Enter the Kingdom of God (as presented by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark)

1. General Statements about entering the kingdom

- a. (Jesus' preaching and teaching assumes a personal interest in the kingdom of God on your part!)
- b. There are always entry requirements
 - (1) At DisneyWorld you have to be 48" tall to ride the grown up rides
 - (2) At the end of high school you have to pass the entrance exams to get into college
 - (3) At the border you have to present credentials like a passport and a visa.
 - (4) Entry into the kingdom of God is restricted as well.
 - (a) Entrance is not subject to caprice, impulse, or even an act of will.
 - (b) Entry is not based on simple interest in the kingdom of God.
 - (c) Entry rests on conforming to the will of God.
 - i) **(Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**)
 - ii) So, how do we enter the kingdom of God?

2. Requirements

- a. 1:15 Repent and believe the gospel
 - (1) **Mark 1:15 (ESV) and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."**
 - (2) Repent and believe the gospel
- b. 4:11 Comprehend the "secret"
 - (1) **Mark 4:11 (ESV) And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables,**
 - (2) (the mystery God kept hidden until to the appointed time to be revealed in Christ: that Jesus is the Messiah and the long awaited kingdom has come!)
 - (3) Like Christmas, expected revelation comes at the right time
- c. 9:47 Practice radical spiritual discipline
 - (1) **Mark 9:47 (ESV) And if your eye causes you to sin, tear**

- it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,*
- (2) There is nothing in the created world, natural or spiritual, worth greater effort to achieve than the kingdom of God
 - d. 10:15 Receive like a child
 - (1) **Mark 10:15 (ESV)** *Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*
 - e. Not like any specific child, but like ever child
 - (1) Every child is needy and knows it (cry)
 - (a) Every child is dependent by nature and status
 - (b) **Job 1:21 (ESV)** *And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”*
 - (c) This is how a grown up expresses child-like faith
 - (2) Every child accepts what is offered with a pure and eager heart, trusting the heart and character of the one who offers
 - (3) Every child must learn humility and how to receive on someone else’s terms (until sin sets in!)
 - (a) “say ‘please’”
 - f. 10:23 Rely entirely on God
 - (1) **Mark 10:23 (ESV)** *And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”*
 - (2) How easy it is for us to begin to trust our own abilities and marginalize God in our lives
 - (3) If we would enter the kingdom of God we must leave the ways and means of the kingdom of the world behind
 - g. 12:34 Live love, which means, live Christ
 - (1) **Mark 12:34 (ESV)** *And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.*
 - (2) Love, epitomized by Jesus, is the key to the kingdom
 - h. 15:43 Look for the kingdom with an earnest, attentive, expectant heart
 - (1) **Mark 15:43 (ESV)** *Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.*
 - (2) Lost diamond: look for the kingdom like you would look for your most treasured possession

IV. Conclusion

A. January 5, 2020:

1. **If we would live wholeheartedly in the grace and mercy and mission**

of God, then we have no greater pursuit in life than to know Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2. Better that sentence should have been, “If we would live wholeheartedly in the grace and mercy and mission of God today, and if our heart’s desire is to dwell forever as a content, satisfied, thankful citizen of His eternal kingdom of glory, then we have no greater pursuit in life than to know Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

B. How badly do you want to enter the kingdom today?

1. The first step is repentance and faith
2. The last is a vibrant expectation
 - a. Are you pursuing the kingdom of God with greater or lesser urgency than a COVID shot?
 - b. What drives your life effort today?
 - (1) To live in the kingdom of the world now
 - (2) Or to live in the kingdom of God forever?