

# “Not Far From the Kingdom”

Mark 12:28-34 (Matthew 22:34-40)

Invitation song: “Almost Persuaded”

## I Introduction:

1. Scripture Reading (NASV; NKJV; NCV )
  - a) This scribe had witnessed a clash between Jesus and the Sadducees and had decided that Jesus was a wise teacher. He wanted, sincerely, to know what commandments were the greatest.
    - 1) When he asks what was the “first” commandment, he doesn’t mean the first in “order”, but the first in weight, or in rank of importance. [see NIV, etc.]
  - b) He wanted Jesus to resolve a disputed issue. Some Pharisees held that the law of sacrifices was the most important.
2. Jesus answered him according to the scripture read. To love God with all the heart and soul was first, and second to love thy neighbor.
  - a) The “shema” was Deut. 6:4-5. “Hear” ... Love God.
  - b) Leviticus 19:18; love your neighbor.
3. On these two basic truths hang all the laws of God (Matt. 22:40).
  - a) The scribe cites Hosea 6:6.
  - b) Someone has said, That if you love God with all your heart, soul and might, you can do anything else you want to. Because, as Jesus says, the one who **loves** him, will keep his commandments.
  - b) The one who loves God with such a passion will do that which is right, he will not want to do otherwise.
4. This scribe, who is unnamed, for I’m sure he represented many men in his day, and just as well he is not named, for many are like him today. You might be like him.
5. He was one who agreed completely with the Lord. He believed the Lord was right.
  - a) This teacher of the law recognizes the accuracy of Jesus’ statement, he approves of it, and views Him as an excellent Teacher.
  - b) Verse 32. “Well said Teacher, you have spoken the truth.”
  - c) And Jesus said of him, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.”
6. I am glad that it was Jesus who said these words rather than some disciple or someone else. Hade it been someone else we would probably have objected strongly to them.
  - a) We would say, “No one is nearer the kingdom of God than anyone else. One not in the Kingdom had just as well be miles away from it. Or, one outside the kingdom a mile is just as well off as one outside it a foot.”

7. As we look at this statement of Jesus, we see **both** some good things, and some tragic things.
  - a) It is more blessed to be **near** the kingdom than a far piece off, because with one’s nearness, there is the greater likelihood he will take the steps to enter –
  - b) This scribe was nearer the kingdom, when he expressed love for God than a man who was an atheists, or who had no had not concern for other men.
  - c) I think it is a much better thing to be near the kingdom, than a long ways from it, for possible entrance into the kingdom is greater.
  - d) There is HOPE for those who understand and believe this great truth.
  
8. The tragic element of the statement, of course, is the revelation that the man was not **in** the kingdom, but only **near** it. Thus it is a sad story.
  - a) Jesus knew some good men, who were not far from the kingdom. And one of the great sorrows in my life, is knowing some good people who are living their life not far from the kingdom of God. One of the saddest griefs in life is to loose some acquaintance that I highly love and respect– knowing that they were not a part of God’s kingdom. Near to it, not far away perhaps, but never committed to being a part of it.

**II.** I would like briefly to note some characteristics about the man in Mark 12 that made him so near the kingdom.

The same thing that makes many today near the kingdom. And if you are **near**, you may think that I am talking about you . . . and I am.

**First –** This man was brought near by **his intellectual sincerely**. Vs. 34. (John 6:45 ff.

1. Being a “scribe” of the law, he was a man more acquainted with the Word of God, than most men, and he appears as one who was an anxious inquirer for more knowledge.
2. There are many here today like him, and in this respect are like Apollos – Acts 18:24-26.

**Second –** He was brought near by **his moral integrity**.

1. The question he raised of Jesus was not to arouse a controversy. He wasn’t doing it for the purpose of arguing or starting a religious quarrel.
  - a) He wanted to know just what Jesus himself would say about this matter.
  - b) He regarded Jesus as a Wise Teacher and he wanted to know what He would say.

- c) We regard him as one who is deeply sincere, a man of integrity.
- 2. But to be sincere, we know, is not enough. Paul was sincere while he was putting Christians to death.  
Acts 7:58;  
Acts 23:1;  
Acts 26:9;  
1 Timothy 1:13.
- 3. Just being conscientious doesn't guarantee one is right with the Lord –  
Matthew 7:21-23.

**Third** – This man was brought near by **his ceremonial faithfulness**.

- 1. By that, I mean that it appears that this scribe was faithful in loving God and his neighbor, in observing the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and keeping the Sabbath.
  - a) And his sincere faithfulness to these things brought him near the door of the kingdom.
- 2. There are some today who never miss a Lord's day worship, who perhaps are the husband or wife, or children of Christians. Who will even come when the Christian in the their family cannot come.

In many cases, such are not far from the kingdom.

**III.** But looking again at Jesus' statement to the man, prompts us to ask the question, “Well, what was it that separated him from entering into the kingdom of God?”

- 1. We've said we believe its better to be **near** the kingdom than a long way from it . . .
  - a) **And yet** at the judgment, in as far as salvation is concerned, a man missing it by a **foot**, has missed it!
  - b) A man that drowns a few feet from the shore is just as dead as the man who drowns in the middle of the ocean.
- 2. You remember what occurred when Paul stood before Agrippa in **Acts 26:28**. When Paul had finished his powerful message, the ruler and those sitting with him were greatly affected by what Paul had said, and it is recorded that Agrippa said, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”
  - a) At that moment, it appears that Agrippa was “not far from the kingdom.”

- b) Earlier in Acts, Felix, the Roman governor heard Paul’s persuasive appeal for Felix to save his soul. He trembled, he quivered, but he replied, “When I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee.” **Acts 24:25.**
- 3. These two men reveal to us the sad truth that one may come near the kingdom, but then remain out of it.

#### **IV.** But what was it that separated this scribe in **Mark 12** from the kingdom?

- 1. It was obvious that he admired Jesus – v. 28 “knowing that Jesus had answered them well.” Verse 32, “Of a truth, Teacher, thou has well said.”
  - a) But admiration for Jesus is not enough. His admiration came short of a loyal and obedient faith.
- 2. He was unready or unwilling at this time to make a complete surrender of himself to Jesus as the Savior Jesus came to be. He was not willing to profess himself openly to become a disciple of Christ. We hope that he did eventually.
- 3. There are various hindrances today that keep some outside the kingdom, many who are not far away. Such things as:
  - 1) **Pride**– because it takes true humility to admit that you are a sinner standing in need of the grace of God.  
  
**Pride** – hinders one from becoming a part of the kingdom of God, when the kingdom is ridiculed, scorned, and mocked with sarcasm by the world who do not know what they are doing.  
  
**Pride** – has always stood as a hindrance to the kingdom. **John 12:42, 43,** “Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.”
  - 2) **Self- righteousness** – hinders one from coming into the kingdom. Instead of coming to the Great Physician to receive forgiveness of sins, some try to find their own remedies – such as home remedies often include denying that one has sinned, or rationalizing it, excusing it away. Believing that I am good enough, and God would not hold sin against a good person like me. Self-righteousness will keep me from coming into the kingdom.

Conclusion:

1. Let you, who are near the kingdom this morning, instead of being content with your nearness, regard your closeness as the reason you should come without delay, and enter the gates before it is too late.
  - 2 Cor. 6:2 “Behold now is the acceptable time, behold, today is the day of salvation.”
  
2. Not far away – “almost”
  - But remember the songs says “Almost cannot avail, almost... is but to fail.
  - a. Confess Christ
  - b. Be baptized into the Lord’s kingdom.