

## Remarks from Mark

Posted By [jeff](#) On August 14, 2008 @ 7:16 am In [Bible Journey-Reading](#)

I've been spending time in the Gospel of Mark recently and over the past week have lingered over the following remarks by Jesus:

- Mark 9:49 - "...everyone will be tested with fire."
- Mark 10:24 - "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God."
- Mark 12:24 - "Your mistake is that you don't know the scriptures..."
- Mark 12:34 - "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."

I realize that I have lifted these comments out of their context; however, I think that the message of what Jesus shares in the individual context of each passage is applicable to an all-encompassing theme. Our earthly journey is one that is pressed on many sides; often it is critically difficult...Jesus expressed this truth to his listeners repeatedly. I wonder why we (generally speaking) fail to take heed of this? I also think Jesus was making an inclusive and very general statement when he said that "it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God." I don't think this is relegated to only the "rich man" (this thinking is supported elsewhere in the gospel accounts). Also...I don't want to make mistakes; not any more than I have already made. This is especially true when I consider the opportunity I have to "know" the scriptures and experience the power of God in my own life.

Finally...what is a person supposed to think about this account which takes place between the teacher of religious law and Jesus in the 12th chapter of Mark's Gospel (Mark 12:28-34)? Here is a man whom Jesus recognizes as understanding the teaching of God, "*realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him...*" And yet, Jesus speaks to him "*You are not far from the Kingdom of God.*"

Questions start to form in my own mind:

1. How close does one need to be to the Kingdom in order to be part of the Kingdom?
2. How much does one need to know
3. How much does one need to understand

An old saying comes to my memory; "close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades..." My belief that it is an all or nothing proposition stands firm. Our passion and relationship for all things Jesus should be all consuming as Jesus points out in this very passage of scripture. He tells the teacher of religious law all we need to know and live:

*"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength...and love your neighbor as yourself. Nothing is greater than these."* (Mark 12:29-31)

## **“Mark” these words...and more**

Posted By [jeff](#) On August 27, 2008 @ 8:11 am In [A Deeper Walk](#), [Becoming the Word](#), [Bible Journey-Reading](#), [Bible Speak](#), [Shaping Me](#), [iCrucified](#) |

So I started digging and meditating on the Gospel of Mark about a month ago; and before that, I was spending time in the Gospel of Luke (my gospel readings for this particular stretch of study began “officially” on June 25...for anyone keeping track -*smile*-). For what it’s worth, I’ll be moving into the Gospel of John next, if you want to join me. Anyway, back to my post, I have to say that my heart and soul is definitely stirred from this past couple months of meditation and reading. Quite honestly it is difficult for me to imagine how anyone reading these words of Jesus cannot be overcome with a sense of urgency to get involved in the work of Jesus’ Kingdom message.

I know I have posted some of my thoughts about Mark in previous posts and at the risk of repeating myself; I plan to share a summary of verses and accompanying thoughts that are stilling ringing and echoing in “ears of my heart.” If I sound redundant, I probably am. Maybe...it bears repeating; if for no one other than me, and if that is the case I’ll go ahead and write it again.

**“He taught with authority...” (Mark 1:22)** - I wondered; “what was the key to His authority?” My conclusion was His closeness with God the Father. ***My takeaway***-our authority, conviction, empowerment, ability, vision, and mission are all born of and sustained by our relationship and “closeness” with God.

**“Why do you question this in your hearts?” (Mark 2:8)** - I know there is context that this statement spoken by Jesus applies to; however, I think in the larger scope of *that* context is the issue of skepticism and doubt. These issues still plague the human condition today maybe even more than in the day Jesus spoke those words. How much of our ability to walk in complete abandon to the will of God is hindered because of the doubt and “question in our hearts?” The walk of faith is certainly not for the faint of heart. He is who He said He is completely in our hearts or He is not because we *question this...*

I do not know the number of times that I have read through the New Testament. I do not know how much time I have spent studying the gospel accounts. I do not know how many times I have read through the gospel of Mark, and in particular, studied chapters seven and eight of Mark’s account. I do know this; I was captured (and still firmly locked in this gospel’s grasp) in a way that I do not recall having occurred to me before. Here are the passages that have gripped my heart and mind:

- **“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce.”** (Mark 7:6-7)
- **“Don’t you understand yet...?”** (Mark 8:21)

- **“Get away from me, Satan... You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”** (Mark 8:33)
- **“Is anything worth more than your soul?”** (Mark 8:34-38)

Yikes! Even at first glance, these words stand out as serious allegations and soul-searching questions of “gut-punching” magnitude. When these statements (by Jesus) are placed in their proper context, their gravity increases exponentially. Consider the first comment listed above; **“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce.”** Jesus is directing his indictment against His own people, the Jews, the chosen people of God. He addresses them as hypocrites. Ouch. Fast forward two-thousand years; examine the polls, surveys, and statistics that we have reported to us (Barna.org, religioustolerance.org, catholicleague.org, and these to just name a few). The data reported from the most recent surveys is almost in complete unilateral agreement with evidence that supports this two-thousand year old comment from Jesus. We are a society of hypocrites; and this is directed to everyone, not only those people outside of the church walls. Check out some of these reports that follow:

- - [1] [From Fox News](#)
- - [2] [From Adherents.com](#)
- - [3] [National Journal](#)

There is some incredibly revealing information buried in the statistics posted in those reports. Perhaps the statement that jumps out most clearly to me from among the numbers is the truthful support that we are still *“a people who honor God with their lips, but whose hearts are far from Him. Our worship is a farce.”* Seriously, how can (in some statistics) a people group of ninety-four percent or even seventy-four percent (both of which are overwhelming majorities) claiming alignment with God and His precepts be ruled and/or influenced by 6-24% of their fellow society? The answer is, they cannot. They cannot; unless their professions of faith are merely lip service, in other words, *“a people who honor God with their lips, but whose hearts are far from Him,”* hypocrites.

The next statement, directed by Jesus toward the twelve disciples, **“Don’t you understand yet?”** comes after they have been following him for awhile. In this case, “following him” meant they were spending the great majority of their waking hours with him. They were being instructed from the Holy Scriptures, they were seeing Jesus perform miracles, they were hearing prophetic testimony supporting the person of the Christ...and Jesus says to them; “Don’t you understand yet?” Dear God in Heaven, help me...help us, not to be so callous, rebellious, and hard-hearted that our ability to understand who you are is obstructed. May we not only know your will, but be anxious servants desiring to **do** your will.

**“Get away from me, Satan... You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”** Jesus spoke these words to, arguably, his best friend on earth. Peter was a man who had been walking with Jesus, and probably knew him as well or better than any of the other eleven disciples. I do not know how

accurate the chronology of the Markian account is, but according to the flow and context of this narrative, Peter had just professed the Lordship of Jesus. In another version of this account, Peter was lauded with blessing and praise from Jesus for recognizing him as Messiah...Jesus proclaimed Peter was speaking directly with knowledge from God. Now, seemingly in the same conversation, Peter as assumed the mind and thinking of Satan. My question and “gut-check;” how often, out of my own selfish desire, do I go from thinking with the *Mind of Christ* to following the lead of human thinking and becoming a satanic stumbling block?

I still hear the question ***“Is anything worth more than your soul?”*** echoing in my ears and mind. I suppose the reason why I cannot escape the reverberating pulse of that question is the evidence of people’s lives. In more cases than not, that evidence proves the answer to the question is “yes” there are things worth more than my/our/your soul. We might not want to openly proclaim the “yes” answer; we might even deny our answer is yes, but the reality that denies our “yes” is the physical evidence of our lives. Whatever we place as priority in our life is the object of our worship. If the object of our worship (and this must be supported by everything we do) is not God, then the “object” is more important than our soul. God help us. God help me; might the evidence of my life speak a resounding “NO” when posed the question, “is anything worth more than your soul?”

I posted some thoughts in an earlier entry with regard to Jesus’ words about how difficult it is in to enter the Kingdom of God ([4] [read about it here](#)). In short, here are the following highlights of that blog post and a few additional thoughts:

- (Mark 10:24) - **“It is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God...”** (Jesus speaking)
- (Mark 12:24) - **“Your mistake is that you don’t know the scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.”** Jesus is speaking to Sadducees; men who had not only memorized the Law of Moses, but in many cases had also memorized the writings of the prophets **AND** had spent most of their life learning/memorizing the rabbinic discourses and commentary explaining the Law of Moses and writings of the prophets. This is what Jesus says to them; *“Your mistake is that you don’t know the scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.”*
- (Mark 12:34) - **“You are not far from the Kingdom of God”** Again, this is Jesus speaking, this time he addresses a teacher of the Law (the equivalent of a tenured Seminary professor with several advanced degrees including PhD in a specific field of study). This account follows a dialogue between Jesus and the teacher culminating in Jesus realizing “how much the man understood.” It is at this point Jesus says to him (the teacher); *“You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”*
- (Mark 13:32-33) - **“Be on guard! Stay Alert!”** Jesus is talking to his closest friends and followers.
- (Mark 13:36-37) - **“Watch for him!”** Jesus is talking to his closest friends and followers. This time the context is in the form of a story illustration with the “him” a man who is a representation for Jesus.

- (Matthew 7:13-14) - “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The road leading to destruction is broad and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.”
- (Luke 13:24-27) - “Work hard to enter the narrow door to God’s Kingdom, for many will try to enter but will fail...”
- (John 14:6) - “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

**My Takeaway:**

Jesus gives warning that it is imperative to “stay alert” and be vigilant, observant, and “watchful” (Mark 13:32-37). He warns of succumbing to temptation through complacency and growing “faint” (Mark 14:37-42). We fail to take heed of His warning and admonition about the “narrow way” and its requirement of total focus and diligence (Mark 10:24 Matthew 7:13-14 Luke 13:24-27 John 14:6). Instead, we attempt to find our own ways to “warm our hearts” making ourselves comfortable (Mark 14:54-72) by keeping our Savior at a “comfortable distance” to our own demise. To which I hear echoing in my heart; **“Don’t you understand yet?”**

*“We are in urgent need of rescue. Tragically, the sense of urgency that we rightly have in our physical life is lacking in our spiritual life, where the consequences are even direr.”* (Mark Driscoll; *Vintage Jesus*, p. 192)

I have been “Marked.” My prayer is that you will be too. Amen.

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