

GOD'S WAY VS. MAN'S WAY (MARK 7), pt. 2

For the past few weeks we have been looking at, through the teachings and parables of Jesus (that we have been covering all summer), the ultimate call that each of us has upon our lives, to be kingdom of God-minded or kingdom of heaven-minded, as the kingdom of God is upon us, meaning that God is presently building His eternal kingdom person by person. One passage of Scripture that speaks to what God intends to accomplish through each of us is **Romans 12:1-2**, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice [surrenderedness to the will of God], holy, **acceptable to God** [take note of that phrase, it'll come up again], which is your reasonable service. And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that **good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**" Really, what God is determining is who wants to be with Him in His glorious kingdom, in all of His perfection and beauty and righteousness? How we live our lives today speaks to that, for we are not just "saved" and then we just wait for our time to eventually prance through the fields of glory, and swim in the crystal sea, and take long strolls with Jesus on the streets of gold. We can certainly look forward to all of that but our being kingdom of God-minded is, first of all, in always "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:2**)

Yet also, God Almighty, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, is using each of us, that is, the children of God, those who have believed on Jesus as being the Christ, the Savior for mankind, from our sins against God, and have then received Him into their hearts, He is graciously using us in building His eternal kingdom. There is certainly nothing wrong with the meditating on what heaven will be like, as God's Word promises, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (**Revelation 21:4**)

That is God's Word telling us that and He gives us a picture of what some of heaven will be like, but there is no way that we can fully grasp how awesome and wonderful it will be, just as we can't fully realize how awesome and beautiful and glorious our Lord, God, and Savior is. Yet, we are told, in the Scriptures to "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." (**Colossians 3:2**) Yet, do you recall the "Lord's Prayer"? Say it with me if you know it, "**Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts (trespasses), as we forgive our**

debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:9-13) "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." When we are looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and praying to God, "Your will be done", that is being kingdom of God-minded, as we understand that we are a part of God's will and plan in building His eternal kingdom, as we are called to share and show the love and the gospel of Christ Jesus. Once again, in **Romans 14:17-19**, Paul tells us, "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**. [That is the difference between being kingdom of God-minded vs. kingdom of this world-minded.] For he who **serves Christ** in these things is **acceptable to God (Romans 12:1-2)** and approved by men. Therefore let us **pursue** the things which make for **peace** and the things by which one may **edify another**." The word "pursue" is the Greek word "dioko" and it means to chase after aggressively. That word "edify" is the Greek word "oikodome" (oy-kod-om-ay), which is a construction term, which means to build up. Jesus was constantly questioned by the Jewish leaders, who were more intent on knowing the letter of the law, or might I say, arguing the letter of the law, as opposed to knowing and living according to the Spirit behind it, and they had no intention in pursuing peace or the edifying or building up God's people. That is in contrast to what Paul was getting at, as well as Jesus, in the distinct differences between the kingdom of God (aka-the kingdom of heaven) versus the kingdom of this world. We are then to pursue aggressively peace and the building up of one another in Christ, building one another up according to the fruit **of the Spirit**, "love, joy, peace, [patience], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. " (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**." That doesn't mean that we stop eating and drinking. Jesus clarifies it better for us in **Matthew 6:31-34**, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** Therefore **do not worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." "**Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**." That can only be possible if we HAVE the Holy Spirit working in us. As Jesus had told Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (**John 3:3**) After Nicodemus made it known to Jesus that he didn't quite understand what that meant, Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the

Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8) The Apostle Paul gives clarification in Ephesians 2:8-10, as to how we are saved, who is doing the saving, and then what happens after one is saved, which then bears the evidence of being saved, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." That faith is in Christ Jesus, dying on a cross for our sins, taking our sins upon Himself, and then conquering sin, death, and evil, raising from the grave on the third day, making a way for us to be saved from our sins against God, and to be reconciled to God, to which we then begin our new life in Christ, of which is an eternal life then in Christ Jesus as children of God! What is really the heart of God? What is His will for us according to His spoken and written Word? We've already looked at what Paul taught in Romans 12:1-2 and Romans 14:17-19. In the beginning of Mark 7 Jesus gives us the difference between:

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The Will of God vs. the Will of Man (Mark 7:1-16)

[of which they are then in collusion with one or the other, that is, the kingdom of God or the kingdom of this world]. Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—' (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do." When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to

them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"

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Jesus said, "[These] people honor[s] Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the **commandment of God**, you hold the tradition of men." That sounds like the difference between being kingdom of God-minded vs. kingdom of this world-minded. The difference between having a relationship with God through Christ vs. being religious. The difference between being a child of God vs. just another lost soul in this world. What Jesus was getting at is what Jesus summed up as really being the heart of God, the will of God for His people in saying what is the great commandment of God's and the second that is like it. Mark recorded for us Jesus' Words, saying "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31) Then Jesus concluded by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:40) Going to church or even being a church leader or by doing good works doesn't make one kingdom of God-minded. It does not make one a child of God. As Jesus told His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." (John 14:15-16)

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The Heart of Man (Mark 7:17-23)

When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

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Compare that to this: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, **that we might live through Him.**" (1 John 4:7-9) Yes, the love of God IS a part of the fruit of the Spirit that is working in the children of God, and as we are to love God with all that is in

us and to love others as God loves them, we can once again be reminded by the Apostle Paul from his love chapter, "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) As God IS presently building His eternal kingdom, we have to wholeheartedly trust Him that He is sovereign over all of His creation, in spite of how it looks to us, as the world seems to be progressively getting worse and more evil. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6) Thank You Lord for Your Word, for it is indeed "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)

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A Gentile Shows Her Faith (Mark 7:24-30)

From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

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What Jesus was telling her initially was recorded by Matthew in his account. Jesus said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Yet later, after Jesus had risen from the dead and had reappeared to His disciples, He gave them and us the "Great Commission", saying "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) Jesus first sought out the lost sheep of Israel and now He is seeking out the lost from within all nations. Now then, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Jesus spoke of that repentance in the "Great Commission" saying to teach others "to observe all things that I have commanded you". Jesus also said this, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with

him." (John 14:23) That's a personal promise from Christ Jesus! That's kingdom of God-minded vs. kingdom of this world-minded. That's the difference between a relationship with God and Christ Jesus vs. the practicing of the rituals of religion.

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Jesus Heals a Deaf-Mute (Mark 7:31-37)

Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, **He sighed**, and said to him, "**Ephphatha**," that is, "Be opened." Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

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One can only guess why Jesus sighed. Perhaps He knew that person would not return to Him, similarly to when Jesus healed the 10 lepers in **Luke 17** but only one returned to Jesus after showing themselves to the priest as was according to their custom and law of Moses. Perhaps Jesus sighed because He knew they would try and make Him king before His time. When Jesus said to teach them "**to observe all things that I have commanded you**" in His "Great Commission", to me that speaks most likely of Jesus' sigh. Maybe Jesus knew what would end up coming out of that man's mouth or the fact that Jesus had commanded them that they should tell no one. Did they obey Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God? No, they did not. They may have thought or said, "why would we not tell anyone, that doesn't make any sense?" Jesus commands us, saying, "**You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'** But I say to you, **love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;**" (**Matthew 5:43-45**) We could very easily say, "yeah but...blah, blah, blah" to that, just as those folks seemingly did by the Sea of Galilee. Seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness isn't just for ourselves. Love hopes all things. In the end God will separate the good from the bad, the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats. God's way for us is contrary to the way of the world. Love vs. hate. Good vs. evil. The kingdom of God and His righteousness, that's what we are to be seeking. "**Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**" Not just for ourselves, but hoping and praying for others that God has placed in our lives and in our paths.