

PENTECOST 19 (2018)

Mark 9 Jesus Christ, Life: the Kingdom of God

Mark 9:38–50 John said to [Jesus], “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 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, ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

In the Name of Jesus.

“Enter Life! Enter Life! Enter the Kingdom of God!”

Joy! That the King of God’s Kingdom repeats that—three times! We slow learners benefit; also little ones; also ‘sinners.’ These are what Jesus is ‘into!’ NOT bodily mutilation: hand, foot, eye. But SO guaranteeing His own that WHERE He is, THERE is the Kingdom of God—that His little ones may hear Him calling as they rise from sleep, as they lie down to sleep, as they die, when HE raises them: ‘At once! Good cheer! And you can have plucked and cut off from you any NUMBER of parts and members and snagging, sticking points; yet I SAY to you that you are entering Life!’

This, from the One Who

was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.”³² But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.¹

How often I must exhort my students at the university, or even in a Catechism class NOT to be overwhelmed by their fear of ignorance, but to DISPLAY it! EMBRACE your lofty status as those at the receiving end of all the Lord’s good gifts; and ASK! Leave fear behind; and ASK! Leave everything behind: even to hand, foot, eye.

“Follow ME!” was His call to His little ones. Where do we

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mk 9:31–32). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

follow? To the place called Golgotha, the Place of the Skull; at which, as HE entered Life, as HE was enthroned as King of a Kingdom no one wants!---He had it ALL cut off—not just this or that part!

Why? For the little ones; for those who need to learn EVERYTHING, ALL OVER AGAIN, ALL THE TIME!

“The healthy do not need a physician; the sick do! I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance!”

In short: thank...God...for the pledge and guarantee of our Baptism at His Name! HE declares to all that WE are His! He would never leave that up to His little ones, His sinners, His children.

So that, as we rise from sleep, as we lie down to sleep, as we die, and when He wakes us up for good—DESPITE our fears, our hands, our feet, our eyes!—we are HIS!

On the same day this last week the Good Lord made your poor pastor a grandpa; and He startled me with reports of my favorite father-in-law's distress. My love feared that it was 'one-in, one-out—in a day!' But I face-timed my favorite yesterday. “They will be done!”

And it made me think about the day, thirty years ago now, when—before I begged HER to give in and have pity on me!—I was raised first to beg HIM to let me have HER!

And the man said to Paul: ‘Let’s just get one thing straight from the start. You, young man, are NEVER going to good enough for my little girl!’

My breath stopped—I think my heart; I was afraid. But then, he went on:

‘Now, calm down! You can marry her; I give you my blessing! But that does not change the fact that YOU are never going to be good enough for my little girl! When are you planning to git hitched?!’

That was the day that I realized my sweetheart’s dad was in the same league with my dad: MAN, were they ever GLAD about their Baptism, Christ their King, the Gospel! Both of ‘em never stopped spreading it!

For that is heaven’s inner secret, into which the Son of God lets His little ones peek today! He came among us; He endured men, endures men still; as if the Father above had said to HIM: ‘YOU, my beloved Son—YOU are NEVER...GOING...TO...BE...GOOD...ENOUGH...for the little ones that I put in YOUR Kingdom! For THEM, you will have

hands, feet, eyes. And those will ONLY be used to remove from MY little ones every offence!’

And so, HE entered this life of ours, entered life, inaugurated the New Testament, cut a new Deal with the world, where God is King and God rules where HE bears all, is salted with fire, is cut off: and yet, He rises and lives and reigns. Oh! My dear ones! He treats HIMSELF SO unworthy of US—that He is even BOLD to call US to what HE has done! And says that HE will be THERE, even where WE do as He has done; as if HE cannot get anything done without US!

‘Eternal Son of Mine, HOME of My Holy Spirit: Here is Life for Me, and so for YOU: Live, as if YOU are never going to be good enough for my little ones; as if YOU are NEVER TOO GOOD to be with them, or with any of them!’

And so, young Samuel Paul, we pray, will soon enter that Life, by the waters of Holy Baptism! Right now, he’s only fit for the worm that does not die and the fire that is not quenched. But soon, he will be great as I can only hope and pray! For what will Samuel Paul—he’s my grandson, by the way; I mentioned that, didn’t I?—what does Samuel Paul still have to learn? Everything! Who is MORE FIT for the work and Spirit of Jesus our King?

Dear ones: hear the beginning of Isaiah 66, from which those terrible words of the worm and fire of the garbage dump Gehenna are taken; hear and learn and turn little again, turn great!

66 Thus says the LORD:
 “Heaven is my throne,
 and the earth is my footstool;
 what is the house that you would build for me,
 and what is the place of my rest?
² All these things my hand has made,
 and so all these things came to be,
 declares the LORD.
 But this is the one to whom I will look:
 he who is humble and contrite in spirit
 and trembles at my word.²

Your run-ins with little ones, sinners, the senseless, those who NEVER seem to learn—those whom YOU must endure again and again—and this is NO JOKE! No sarcasm here! FACE your temptation, your annoyance with others, with the world, with those who do not understand you, God, anything!---

WHERE you and the OTHER sinner meet, THERE is a Kingdom of God meeting; THERE is the entrance to LIFE—to HIM!

Are you failing as I do? Gasping out frustration; or spitting it out? Or speaking it out? Then you, with your poor minister, have every reason to tremble at His Word.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Is 66:1–2). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

And every reason to be glad! For if we are THAT EMPTY of every Word the Lord has been trying to put into us—then what better vessel has His Spirit to fill, than the emptiest of all?

You WILL enter Life, my dear ones! You WILL enter the Kingdom of God! For THAT is all up to HIM; NOT to you and me! Now, what little one, what empty vessel, what child, what great one, can you and I now call out to enter LIFE, enter LIFE, enter the Kingdom of God?! In the Name of Jesus!