

FRIDAY

“KINGDOM OF WHICH WORLD?”

SCRIPTURE:

John 18:33-36; 19:14-16

Remember how bewildered the disciples were after Jesus had been crucified? They simply could not understand why he had not stayed to build a powerful physical empire on earth. This is what they wanted: power and a king men could see and fear and obey.

But Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” He meant it was not made up of physical things. It was a spiritual kingdom made up of men who were conscious of the spiritual importance of living, men whose happiness did not depend on merely physical, or material things and who would be able to live in and inherit eternal life.

If Christ’s kingdom had been only a physical kingdom, what would happen to it once all its people had died . . . and their physical possessions had to be left behind?

Yet is it not the spiritual qualities we seek in one another? A child responds to the love and gentleness of his mother, the wisdom and strength of his father. These are what he seeks when he is lonely or afraid. And so it is with men and women and their deepest needs. After all is said, we still seek the love and compassion of God — material possessions at such a time are a sad substitute, cold, meaningless . . .

Once we understand the importance — the indestructibility of the soul, the kingdom of God becomes a reality.

Prayer: O God, so often I forget that there is more to life than today. Help seek the things which will prepare me for life with you, now and later. AMEN

SATURDAY

*“BY WHAT AUTHORITY
DOES HE SPEAK?”*

SCRIPTURE:

Mark 2:1-8, 9-12; Hebrews 4:14-16

Many years ago, a beggar came into the court of the king to ask pardon for a crime his son had committed. Instead of being brought into the king, the beggar was led into the chambers of the king’s only son, the prince of the realm.

But the beggar said, “I will not speak to the prince. My business is with the king. Only he can grant my son’s pardon.”

But the page said, “The king has given his authority to the Prince — he has given him the royal seal. Now he can pardon your son in the king’s name.”

This is who Christ is to us. He has all authority in heaven and on earth to do what- ever we ask. He is not merely a second man, without power; he rules with God, answers prayer and forgives sin; guides, counsels, and strengthens. No mere human has such authority in all areas . . . As the Jews said to Jesus when they attempted to convict him of blasphemy, “Who but God can forgive sin?”

The answer, of course, is — only God . . . and our Lord is divine. “He who hath seen me, hath seen the Father.”

Prayer: Lord, may I never forget who you are. You have lived as men live, and yet you have the authority and compassion only God can have toward us. Grant that I may come closer to you in my daily walk, and always look to you as the Lord of my life — my priest, my confessor, and my God. AMEN

Daily Family Devotions

The thought begins in the Bible verse:
please take the time to read it first.

MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2023

“HUNGER IN THE INWARD PARTS”

SCRIPTURE:

Micah 6:14-7:7; John 6:28-51; Revelation 7:16, 17

“You shall eat . . . but there shall be hunger in the inward parts”

We all know this deep, aching emptiness that we try to fill with physical love or money, music or fame or success, drugs or drink or activity. It is not new to the human race. It is as old as the first man. We suffer today from the same hunger men knew two thousand years ago. But there is one difference: we have Jesus Christ. They only hoped for him.

Yet what difference can Christ make? He was sent by God specifically to fill every basic hunger of the human soul. We find every word he speaks is directly related to one of these needs.

Man’s inner emptiness is a combined hunger for love . . . forgiveness . . . acceptance . . . wisdom . . . meaning to life . . . access to God . . . perfection, and spiritual immortality. And Jesus Christ is clear in his claim that “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”

Is this what you are looking for? Could he fill that emptiness which nothing else has been able to fill?

Prayer: God, how great you are to have granted every desire of our hearts — to have given us food for the inner man, to have sent your Son — the tangible, living proof that you are a personal God and that the soul of each of us is precious to you. May we eagerly accept your Son so that our lives may be filled to over-flowing, that the inner man may be satisfied and that we may be whole people. AMEN

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TUESDAY

"IF I BE LIFTED UP"

SCRIPTURE:

Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-18

It is difficult to *fully* understand Christ's words without first reading the Old Testament, for in almost every instance the New Testament is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the substance of the long, indistinct shadow.

We see here that Christ is referring to a well-remembered incident in Hebrew history when God sent serpents to sting a disobedient and recalcitrant people. Christ uses this incident to illustrate precisely what his mission is.

Today Satan, "the ancient serpent," literally does bring spiritual death to those who are disobedient and rebellious toward God — but just as God himself sent the remedy to the Hebrew people in their physical agony, so he sent Jesus, the Son, to those in spiritual death-agonies. And as simple as it was to the Hebrew people and simple as it may seem to us — this is God's condition for life, and we can accept it or not.

In the Hebrew camp, those in the throes of death were no longer too proud to lift up their eyes and be saved. And today, only those who know how close they are to dying inside will lift up their eyes and say, "Lord, I believe!" To these people, God's Son on a cross — incredible or not — is their only hope.

Prayer: O God, forgive us for rejecting the simple, the incomprehensible, the divine. God, help us to trust you more, to grant you the right to be our God, to take with grateful hearts what you have offered so freely. AMEN

WEDNESDAY

"WHY DID HE COME AT ALL?"

SCRIPTURE:

John 14:8-9; 1 Samuel 3:1-10

As far back as we can trace human history, man has been trying to reach God and God has been trying to speak to men. Why has this been so hard?

Man is both spirit and body — both soul and mind. But once man began to be more concerned with the physical body and its needs, the mind and all that it could accomplish — the less conscious he became of the soul and its spiritual needs. This made "spiritual" conversation with God difficult; we became used to people's voices— *people* giving what we needed.

Soon, we believed only what we could see and touch and hear with our physical senses. We could no longer "hear" God's voice as Noah, Abraham, Samuel and David heard it. We had to have something physical. And so God came to us as a person. He placed the life of Christ within Mary and she, then, gave birth to the physical likeness of God — the Son of God, Jesus Christ for men to see and touch and hear.

So men, seeing God at last, could believe! They saw divine love, for the first time in their lives, through his Son. They saw what divine compassion and forgiveness was when God's Son died for them on Calvary.

This is why Christ came. To show us the Father.

Prayer: Lord, please help me to understand this miracle of love which you have performed for us. Help my faith to grow as I come to know you better; help my belief, I pray. AMEN

THURSDAY

"HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD?"

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 17:5-8; Luke 3:21-23

So each of us someday must make a decision regarding Jesus Christ . . . who is he, really? A wonderful man through whom God uniquely expressed divine love but a man completely human, not really the Son of God . . . or the only One of his kind in all of creation, the Son of God born of woman . . .

Any opinion we may have is not better than anyone else's — but what has the Bible to say? We read many times that God says of Christ, "This is my beloved Son . . . listen to him!"

Whether or not we can accept this amazing and marvelous fact, depends — not on God's ability to perform it, but upon our ability to believe God. Can you believe him?

There are many men today who cannot bring themselves to accept Jesus as God's Son. Yet if he is not, then to these men he has no power to forgive their sins, answer their prayer or renew their lives. These men cannot worship him . . . they can only try to ape him, and in this kind of mimicry there is no salvation, no hope in a new life . . . no hope at all.

Unless Christ is what he claimed to be, there is no power in Christianity.

Prayer: Lord God, when I think of your love and planning for the human race, if only it would come to you, I am grateful and humble for such a God. Help me not to doubt you but to know you as Almighty Lord. AMEN

(Supplemental reading: Matthew 1:18-23)