

"The Kingdom of God Is Within You"
(Kingdom Ethics - Luke 17:20-21; Matthew 6:10)

"On earth as it is in heaven..." (Matt 6:10). That is a prayer fulfilled in Christ the King. It is also a prayer for the end of the world as we know it! Yet, we pray it so that it is answered in us. So we may learn by faith to be kingdom minded in a mindless world.

Kingdom ethics is not merely a moral code, not the rules of Christian conduct, or not where we draw our behavioral boundaries. Christian ethics is our genuine expression of the "ethos" - the guiding Way, Truth, and Life of the Kingdom of God on earth. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, we do not find New Covenant "Law", we find one illustration after another of what New Covenant "Life" might look like on earth (as it is in heaven). We see before our eyes what is "natural" to the life of the King being "naturalized" in us through our faithful, hopeful loving choices to trust in Him.

To begin with, Kingdom ethics, although otherworldly in origin, come from within, not without (Heb 8:10; II Cor 3:3). Their source is "Christ in us... our hope of glory" (Col 1:27). With the character of the King "imported" into our human spirits, we have whatever we need to function as kingdom citizens even in a fallen world. Therefore, kingdom ethics are not really so much about the improvement of our character, but the willing expression of His nature (Ga 2:20).

Kingdom ethics are loving, not legal (Matt 22:37-40; Ro 13:10; I Jo 4:8). Every kingdom "ethic" is an extension, an expression of the King Who is love... in action through us. Love, not law, has the first and the last word in kingdom people - from Jo 3:16 to I Jo 3:16 - love from His person... to and through our person... for another person! In God's kingdom, we do not ask questions like, "Is it legal?", or, "Does it work?" We ask, "Is it loving? Is it so congruent with the love demonstrated in Christ that we can stamp His name on what we do next? (Col 3:17)

To be sure then, kingdom ethics are born of humility, not hubris (Matt 11:29; Phil 2:3,8; Ja 1:21; 4:6) They are not earned by good behavior, not generated by being more committed, not produced by trying harder. For ethical expression of the kingdom within us to be released, God simply asks us, "How low will you go?" (Phill 2:5-9; II Cor 4:7-12) We will never live by kingdom ethics by either proudly exalting ourselves in any way or by contemptuously looking down on others.

Kingdom ethics are released and expressed through us as we live and move and have our being in the overcoming Life of our King (Jo 16:33).

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"Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts"
(with apologies to Bernard of Clairvaux, 11th cent.)

Jesus, the joy of loving hearts,
The fount of Life, the Light of Men,
From the best creation can impart,
We turn to Your filling again.

Your truth unchanged has always stood;
You save those who upon You call:
To all who seek You as their good,
They find You as their all in all.

We taste of You, O Living Bread,
And feast upon You still.
We drink of You, O Fountain-head,
And have from You our fill.

Our spirits find our rest in You,
No matter where our lot is cast,
Your gracious promises ever true,
Your faithful love holds us fast.

O steadfast Christ Who always stays,
Who grants us strength and might,
Chase the fear and dark away,
Shine through us Your holy Light.

- I John 3:3

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  Indwelling Life of the King

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 Learning how to go "low"