

## A MISS IS AS GOOD AS A MILE

**Text:** *Mark 12:34: And when Jesus saw that he [Scribe] answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.*

This man came just short of Christ. He is a more hopeful person than others by being nearer to deliverance from his sins than others who are indifferent and willful rejecters. All men — before coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ — are in darkness, but some are nearer to the light than others. Jesus said in **Mark 12:34:**

***Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.***

**“Not far from”** is a great encouragement to the seeking soul; but, on the other hand, it is not “in”. A miss is as bad as a mile.

There are souls who come near to accepting Christ, being drawn by the Spirit, but they drift away, fight off conviction, harden their hearts, and may never feel the tug of God upon the soul — ever again.

What were the things in this Scribe that made Jesus see in him one that was not far from the Kingdom? We see here one who was within hearing of the Gospel. We find him in the crowds that gathered around Jesus, listening to words of eternal life and salvation. This means more than if he had heard Jesus in the accredited place of worship, the synagogue. It was probably a little old-fashioned, open-air meeting. The fact that this high aristocrat, a learned Scribe, would be found listening to Jesus in the common crowd proves he was genuinely interested in the things of the Kingdom.

This young man is a type of thousands of modern scribes who go to church reverently and seem to be deeply interested. They actually enjoy a fresh, brainy sermon; and yet, when pressed with the claims of the Gospel, it is all Greek to the intellectual hearer. But this personal interview brings home the thing that otherwise might have left the man deceived as to his true condition and hope of heaven. Many think that because they are religiously minded and go to church, they are saved; but in this incident, Jesus let the scribe know just where he was. He was not far away — but not “in”, as yet.



**To be in church is not to be *in Christ*. Unless a man is *in Christ*, he is lost.**

**2 Corinthians 5:17: If any be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

If a man is not *in Christ*, he has no life in Him, life that is eternal.

**John 5:12: He that hath the Son [of God] hath life . . .**



and, Christ is the only accredited channel through which the life of God comes into the soul. To be in touch with Him is to be in touch with life everlasting.

This scribe was an earnest inquirer after eternal life. When we see him in this Gospel, he is asking questions. The type of questions a man asks is a test of the man himself. The nature of his questions tells and reveals his heart. This man put a great question to Jesus as recorded in

**Matthew 22:36:**

***Master, which is the Great Commandment in the Law?***

No one knows what that entire question meant unless one has read all the commandments which were taught in the Talmud. This scribe wanted to get beyond it all, right down to the core, the heart of the Gospel. Jesus answered:

**Mark 12:29-31:**

***29 The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is One Lord:***

***30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.***

***31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.***

Jesus took him away from the Talmud and books of men to the Word of God, in Deuteronomy.

**Mark 12:32-34:**

***32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He:***

***33 And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.***

***34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou are not far from the Kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.***

**This man represents one who has an honest heart, and thereby the true light of the Gospel shines into the heart rightly. To have the knowledge and the way of salvation is the first step to getting saved. To realize our need to pardon is good, but to get that pardon is quite another thing. To know, and then to do, is the big question in every life.**

Christ's reason for saying "***thou art not far***", but not "*in*", is because while the difference between the two is little, the difference is immense in its results. A man may hover between life and death, and a little encouragement, a prayer, and a touch of God would be the turn for the better. There is a dividing line between life and death in the soul. It may seem to be a very little thing, but the end result is an Eternity with or without Christ, and that is of immense importance.

You cannot get a better suggestion as to what to do than what is found in the life of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed. So what you need in order to bring you into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is just this last step – namely, the Step of Decision.



Your heart, like the scribe's heart, has opened to the Gospel because you want to be right and get right. Now come, just as you are, and Christ will save you right now!

This was the young man whom Jesus loved and could not save. Although the Gospel addresses itself to the vilest of the vile, yet it is not exclusively to such that the message of salvation is sent. There is no character so far gone in vice, sin, or shame that he needs salvation from inward corruption of the heart.

The invitation has gone out to the highest of sinners — **“Come unto Me.”** But with equal affection, the Gospel addresses itself to those who are not in any common estimation to be numbered with the chief of sinners, but to the morally and socially commendable. There are always some such in every congregation, and we have an invitation for them just as earnest, honest, and frank as for the lowest of sinners.

Such came to Jesus, and Jesus said, **“One thing thou lackest”**.

Let me first of all address a word of commendation to you, because you only lack one thing. Secondly, a word of warning, you do lack one thing. Thirdly, that lack will send you to Hell. Fourth, let me tell you how that lack may be met or supplied.

First of all then, the commendation of this young man — because he was moral, upright, not a willful sinner or openly corrupt. If you are one such, congratulations!

God knows every man should be ashamed of sin, and if the conscience is not seared, he is ashamed of it. Sin puts shame on the face of man. Those who do not indulge in sin can proudly say, along with the young man as recorded in **Luke 18:21:**

***All these [commandments] have I kept from my youth up.***

He was a religious man, as shown in his reverence for Jesus, and was most commendable, especially in such a lawless age as this one that had no respect for the Lord’s House.

“Yet what lack I?” He lacked a full surrender of his heart to Jesus. Jesus tested him and heard his confession outwardly. His riches were his god. Self-righteousness may be yours, but it will not stand in the Presence of Jesus.

***Go, and give up your hindrances, and you will have riches in Heaven.***



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