

“Under A Different Influence”
Monthly Comment – April, 2008

Spring has sprung! The mass majority of earth's inhabitants in the Northern Hemisphere are strangely happier; no more depression until December. J April, like many of the months in western civilizations, derive their names from Roman emperors and Roman mythological gods. July is derived from Julius Caesar and August from Augustus Caesar who clarified and completed the calendar reform of Julius Caesar. If that doesn't bother you, how about January coming from Janus, the Roman god of gates and doorways? February came from the Roman festival of purification. March came from the Roman god of war who was Mars. April derives itself from the Greek goddess of beauty called Aphrodite. The list goes on!

Whether we like it or not, the calendar we use devolved from pagan people. The Babylonians were some of the earliest calendar conceivers and Rome simply adopted much of their approach.

Truth is, everywhere we look we see the effects of the race of man under the dominion of sin and under the strong influences of the evil one. It is the way it is. Even Jesus did not change the way it is. Rome still was Rome; the devil remained being the devil; sinful man kept right on sinning.

We cannot change anyone's nature, nor can we change the devil however much we would like to. I would like to change the name of the Missouri River to the Montana River, but there isn't much support for that, even though its headwaters are right here in Montana.

What Jesus did do was to usher in a whole new creation and a brand new way of doing business. With the coming of the Christ, came the entrance of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, made its beachhead in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago.

This Kingdom of God is accessed by being born again through faith in what the King of the Kingdom accomplished for all its subjects. “Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” is not just a part of a rote prayer we memorize as kids from Mt. 6:10. It is the marching orders of all His subjects who have sworn allegiance to Him. He has told us to “...do business till I come” (Luke 19:13).

Man is certainly not where or what he will be ultimately when the King will come in the fullness of His majesty and take complete rule and dominion during His 1,000 year reign in the end of this age. But in the meantime, realities are that those who understand His purposes for them in this life and operate in His delegated authority need not live under the dominion of sin or the influence of the evil one.

This may be the month of April, “Aphrodite's month,” but you and I dear one, march to the beat of “Worthy is the Lamb.” We live in and under a different Kingdom and a different King. We are only moved and influenced by Him, not the kingdoms of this world. We do business under His auspices.

Blessed be the King of kings,

Mike

“First Things”
Weekly Comment – April 6, 2008

First means coming before all others. It means preferable! First means before or above all others in time or rank. If you competed in some contest and finished second, third, or fourth, it means you didn't win; you were not the best. First has to do with preeminence or that which is superior to anything or anyone else.

That being said, what would God have to say about firsts? I am glad you asked, because He has a lot to say about “first.” I suppose the first place to start about firsts, is what is the number one first.

Not surprisingly, unless we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3), it's Christ! “He is before all things...that He may have preeminence” (Col. 1:17,18). If we need more, He says He is “...the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last...” (Rev. 1:11).

To say you are the first and the last is arrogant, only if you aren't. If I say I am the first and the last preacher in the world, I would not only be wrong, I'd be dumb. If someone says they are the best, give it a day, a week, or a year and sure enough their record will fall to someone better.

But Christ is the First and the Last. There is no close second. He is God! We cannot do better or have better than Him! Which is why as our Creator He says...

“Seek Me, and live,”

Mike

“The Second First”
Weekly Comment – April 13, 2008

The first “First” in Scripture is Christ. He is the “Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last...He is before all things...that He may have preeminence” (Rev. 1:11; Col. 1:17-18). The second first is the first and greatest commandment. “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” (Mk. 12:29-30).

This fits, doesn't it? Since He is “the First, the Alpha, the preeminent One,” it is appropriate that He be loved. What doesn't seem to fit is love connected with command. Commanding love sounds forced, not very tender or intimate.

Agape is the Greek word for love used here. It is not a feely, touchy kind of word or action. Agape love is a love that is based in choice. Agape love is based in rightness and appropriateness.

God commands love toward Himself and even our enemies because it is the right thing to do; the appropriate thing! It may sound egocentric of God to command us to love him “FIRSTLY,” but it is not for His benefit or needs that the command is issued.

The very best thing all mankind can do for themselves is to love God with all their being. In fact, all the commandments are not issued for God or His benefit or advancement, but for ours alone.

It's a good thing for us to love God,

Mike

"The Third First"
Weekly Comment – April 20, 2008

The first "first" is Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last (Rev. 1:8, 10, 17), which is an early clue as to what the "last" first will be as well. Since He is the preeminent One, it is not surprising to learn that the second "first" is loving Him and that is revealed in the first and greatest commandment (Mk. 12:30).

Now closely related to the second "first" is the third "first": "Loving your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:31). Some studious one may quip, "There is no "first" to loving people," but actually there is. Try living out of sorts, in avoidance or at odds with your neighbor and then you'll see the first come out as a real priority – "First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt. 5:23). Here our Lord is telling us the value He places on human relationships. If we have any relationship that is not in a loving way, then Jesus tells us that we need to get that righted even before any act of worship toward Him. That's a priority if there ever was one.

Being reconciled to your brother (sister, parents, neighbors, children, and work associates) is a "first" thing in the heart of God and a loving thing to do.

Reconciled,

Mike

The Fourth First
Weekly Comment – April 27, 2008

Jesus is the FIRST, first! He will also be the last first as well, because He is the first and the last (Rev.1:17). The apostle says He is the preeminent One (Col.1:18). It is fitting then that the second first is closely related to the first, as loving God with all you have is the first and greatest commandment. The third first, wouldn't you know is connected to the second greatest commandment of loving your neighbor. Jesus puts a priority first on the reconciliation of soured relationships. Reconciled relationships are more of a priority to Christ than any offering we can bring to Him in our worship (Mt.5:23). God does not want His family at odds with each other.

The fourth first is the Kingdom of God! "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt 6:33). This portion of Matthew is referred to as the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). A multitude had gathered as well as His disciples and He preaches to them one of His lengthiest sermons on record. He had just finished telling them that birds and flowers are under the providential care of the Father and so anxiety and worry over physical and emotional needs were pointless with God tending to His children's needs.

God wants to provide for His children as does any reasonably normal father or mother would. Parents know that with just growing up, there is enough stuff to deal with as children without adding the discomfort of worry to life. So Jesus tells His followers to leave the figuring out of your tomorrows to Him and just live life in the now. Worry, He said can't add one cubit to a persons stature (Mt.5:27), and today has enough trouble to it, why factor in tomorrows weight as well (Mt.6:34). Worry can kill us!

I never once worried about food or clothing or any other basic need while growing up with my parents. I might have worried what was for dinner as I might not have liked it, but I never worried if I would have food. My parents provided for me and I never gave it thought. That is how I think the Lord wants it with us! Trust Him! Enjoy the Father and His love for us. Put Him first, seek Him first and what He wants for us and leave the worry to Him. He isn't all that worried either; I think He has things all under control. It's like the Greyhound Bus motto "leave the driving to us", only for us it's God. He will get us where we are supposed to be with what we are supposed to have. He is the best Father! Believe!

Just be His kid,

Mike