

# **What is Jesus Doing?**

## **WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM US?**

Today we're going to talk about what God expects from His people and more importantly what He deserves from us.

The more I study the Bible and look at the realities of the way some contemporary Christians are inclined to live their lives, the more I am convinced that many have allowed their worldview to influence their understanding of Scripture instead of allowing Scripture, revealed by the Holy Spirit, to radically transform the way they live.

As believers who are saved by grace, some display a tendency to be a bit smug, satisfied that they have a "backstage pass to heaven" as a good friend who has now passed away once called it. It appears that they believe that they are now able to go about their lives with the same hard-hearted and selfish attitudes that they had before they professed faith in Christ knowing that their eternal destination is assured.

But the more I study the life and teachings of Jesus, the more I am convinced that He is in the business of radically disrupting the patterns of how we conduct our daily lives, business and relationships.

As the Sovereign God of the universe, His is an upside-down kingdom, the ground rules of which are different from the ground rules by which humans are inclined to function in a "me and mine first" world.

There is also a tendency on the part of some Christians to separate Old Testament law and New Testament Grace in a way that says New Testament Grace for me and Old Testament judgment for you.

What the Holy Spirit has put on my heart to share with you today is that the entire Bible from "In the beginning" in the Old Testament all the way through to "Amen" at the end of Revelation is about Jesus Christ and His Upside-Down Kingdom.

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Jesus came to create a new kind of human being, to have dominion over the earth because of the fallen nature of Mankind. He did this by being obedient to His Father and paying the ultimate price with His life.

You may remember that satan actually used scripture from the Old Testament to tempt Jesus in the desert. satan's goal was to get Jesus to abandon His mission; it's not much different today. He's still up to the same old tricks.

Throughout our history both before and after Jesus' finished work on the Cross, people have used and abused the Word of God to manipulate others in order to further their own interests.

We see this in big ways and small ways. It is true with nations and religious institutions, and it is true with individuals. It was true in Jesus' time, and it is true today. People desire power. God desires humility.

In first chronicles we see what God really desires from His Chosen people.

Hear the Word of the Lord.

*if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

- 1 Chronicles 7:14

Considering the current state of our nation and the world that seems like a really good place to start... So today let's talk about us. What does God desire from us?

Because we trust God for His grace and mercy, and in most cases, His generosity towards us, it may become easy for us to take Him for granted. Our prayer life may consist of asking Him for things that we want rather than inquiring of Him what he wants from us.

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This is not a quid pro quo as it were, which means an exchange of “I’ll do this for you if you do that for me” because that’s not who God is. That is just not His nature.

But God makes it very clear from the beginning and throughout the Bible that if we do things His way instead of trying to get Him to do things our way, life will be better for us, and He will be glorified.

In the very first Psalm we get a picture of a person that the Lord delights to bless...

*Blessed is the person who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.*

- Psalm 1:1-2

I like the way the psalmist references that loving and meditating upon, and actually ACTING upon the law of the Lord is the antidote to three things that God apparently DOESN’T care for that are all referenced in these two verses...

1. Listening to bad worldly advice,
2. Hanging out with bad company and
3. Being snarky and backbiting...

But what exactly is the law of the Lord and didn’t Jesus replace the Law?

No. As the only righteous remnant of One He fulfilled the Law of Moses and all the promises to Abraham.

Last week in his study of James, pastor Paul referenced what the Apostle James calls the “Royal Law”. By the Royal Law, James refers to the whole of the law of God, revealed to Moses and then fulfilled in Christ.

Jesus revealed what he wants from us when he told the Pharisee who asked Him “what is the great commandment of the Law?”

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*Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

- Matthew 22:37-40

While keeping the Royal Law is not a quid pro quo, as we just said, and God’s grace is freely given, it is a Kingdom law akin to the natural law that we call cause and effect. The cause and effect of the Royal Law of the Upside-Down Kingdom is that if you truly love God you will show it by loving the people he puts in your life.

John the Beloved puts a fine point on it when he says this...

*If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

- 1 John 4:20-21

The cause and effect of the royal law is this, that if you love God, you will absolutely love your brother. God from the beginning has made it very clear that He really desires for His people to love one another. And this means not just other believers but all those whose paths you cross.

For example... God did not tell the people of Israel to only love other Israelites...

*And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.*

- Leviticus 19:33-35

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I think we can safely expand the word of the Lord to His people Israel, to the word of God to His people in Christ Jesus...

When Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan to the Pharisees, what he was telling them was that any true follower of His Way would take care of those who are not one of their brethren simply because of Mercy. Mercy is something else that God wants from his people.

We see this in the words of the prophets to God's chosen people...

*Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart Against his brother.'*

- Zechariah 7:9-10

Another of the prophets put it very simply ...

*He has shown you, O man, what is good;  
And what does the Lord require of you  
But to do justly, to love mercy,  
And to walk humbly with your God?*

- Micah 6:8

So, we see that God truly does want us to be humble, to be merciful, to do justly, and by doing justly, He means being an active defender of the weak. What else does God desire from those who would truly follow him, especially those who are new creations in Christ Jesus?

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Here's a somewhat exhaustive list...

- To pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- To rejoice in persecution from others. (Matthew 5:11-17)
- To seek God and His Kingdom first. (Matthew 6:33)
- To submit to God and resist the devil. (James 4:7)
- To treat others as you would have them treat you. (Matthew 7:12)
- To love your enemies. (Matthew 5:43-44)
- To forgive those who spitefully use and abuse you. (Matthew 5:39)
- To take care of the widows and orphans in your midst. (James 1:27)
- To take active sin seriously and repent. (Matthew 5:29, 4:17)
- To let your light shine before everyone. (Matthew 5:16)
- To be anxious for nothing and grateful for everything. (Philippians 4:6-7)
- To not worry about tomorrow at the expense of today. (Matthew 6:34)
- To be led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14)
- To keep your word. (Matthew 5:37)

It's a long list but trust me when I tell you it's not even complete... it's just all I could think of at the moment.

Obviously one of the other things that God wants his people to do is to not sin. In Christ we have many ways to avoid sin, but there is one sin that is pretty easy to miss, and we must be careful to remember to avoid it...

Again, it is James who reminds us...

*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

- James 4:17

## What is Jesus Doing?

Let me ask you a very personal question. Have you allowed Jesus Christ to transform your life? Is He your Savior? Is He your Lord? I know you've referred to Jesus many times as your "Lord and Savior." I am not asking if you have ever said those words.

It is easy to say them to the sweet, comforting, caring Jesus, who is going to solve all your problems in this life and in the life to come. I am asking you if you have come to a point in life where you are willing to follow Him in that radical aspect of who He is, as the One who is in the process of turning your life upside-down.

Jesus is enlisting you to live in that economy that doesn't function the way this world functions. His kingdom is not of this world, it is the kingdom of God in which the stranglehold of sin is broken by His death and resurrection.

Once you repent of sin and put your trust in Him, He enlists you to be His agent of reconciliation, to live in daily relationship with the Father, through the power of His Spirit and to be a participant with Him in His awesome Kingdom-building work.

Hear His Word and Spirit as the Apostle Paul pleads with us...

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

- Romans 12:1

So we see now that the question "what does God want from us" is an extensive one, and one that is not without cost, but when we consider the incredible sacrifice that not only our glorious heavenly Father made in sacrificing His beloved and only begotten Son, and we consider also that Jesus himself, the Son, Messiah, fully God but also fully a human like us, willingly made on a cross to deliver us from sin and death...

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It only makes sense that if we are going to be citizens of heaven because of that sacrifice, that we would also be willing to be ambassadors of heaven and allow the Jesus in US to come out so that the world can see the goodness of God that was embodied in Christ Jesus shine forth in us in this place.

As the great 18th Century Revivalist John Wesley said...

*Do all the good you can,  
by all the means you can,  
in all the ways you can,  
in all the places you can,  
at all the times you can,  
to all the people you can,  
as long as ever you can.*

– John Wesley

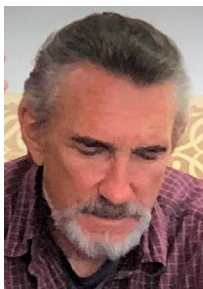
And so, this is my prayer for you as it was the Apostle Paul's prayer to the Colossian Church.

*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

- Colossians 1:9-12



# What is Jesus Doing?



*Let's Pray,*

*- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi*