**You are not far from the Kingdom of God.** (Mark 12.34)

Several funerals of late – as one approaches death many question what they have achieved in life, and is there a heaven, and if so, will God accept me there?

These concerns are found in the gospel stories. All heavy questions, with significant answers.

Eg Mark 10.17: What must I do to inherit eternal life? Mark 10.37: James and John anxious about their place in the Kingdom of God (K/G). Mark 12.28: which is the most important commandment?

Teachers of the Law (T/L) often get a bad press in the gospels, but one here seems genuine – TEXT.

All our angst, all these issues with which many wrestle, at best lead us to TEXT. But is this enough?
In a game recently I *almost* won, but I actually lost! A miss is as good as a mile, no matter how close.

This T/L despite all his efforts and understanding is not ‘*in’* K/G, just ‘*not far’*. So who is ‘*in’*?

At a funeral we have eulogies (= good words in Greek) – I have never conducted a funeral of a bad person, only saints! Similarly presbyters are never as popular as when they are leaving a parish. But like T/L TEXT.

No one reaches K/G by being good, by saying/doing the right thing. *Best* we can do is – TEXT.

Once you realise this, there are two responses:

1. Despair and stop trying to be good – what is the point? In TV programme ‘Packed to the Rafters’ Retta refuses junk food but once she gives in she stops trying to be good. In her case despair leads to change. Ben’s wife dies suddenly & he is ‘frozen’. But what change is there for us, if nothing makes a difference?
One reason given for non-vaccination is ‘it makes no difference’; bit like not voting. It is easy to let an seemingly hopeless situation lead us to giving up. TEXT – but I want to be ‘*in’* not ‘*not far’*.
2. Throw yourself onto God’s loving mercy. This is much better, but requires humility – I have failed, and I cannot get ‘*in’* on my own. But the very act of humility, the very acceptance that we cannot get ‘*in’*, is what is needed!

But this does not mean trying to be good enough for K/G is useless. After all we do not just want to get ‘in’ but feel right in the K/G. Dave Rafter finds his real father, Tom, is in jail, who urges Dave to accept Tom’s grandson, Coby, as an employee but gets Coby to arrange thefts from Dave’s work. Coby is found out, but by then the love he received from his new family leads him to beg for a second chance to be ‘in’. In Coby’s case getting ‘in’ is not something he can do, but simply accept and try to live up to. Both ‘acceptance’ and ‘living up to’ are important.

*Our* efforts are not those that matter (thankfully), but those of Christ; even so we seek to be worthy of K/G & so live its life, not as a means to get ‘*in’*, but as a thanks for being let ‘*in’* despite ourselves.

What assures us of God’s intentions is that love seen in JC on the cross.