

Panta ta ethne or #mybestlife?
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A variety of messages are flowing from pulpits that, while cloaked in Biblical language, do not represent a Kingdom perspective. If we are not careful, they can lead us into a quagmire that is inconsistent with the hopes, dreams, and strategies of Jesus.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus came to declare the good news of His Kingdom, inviting people to live under His life-giving rule. By His incarnation, teaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension, He defeated the devil, securing His Kingdom authority. The pronouncement of this victory is more than just the sum of our individual salvations, it is a holistic triumph to win back all that was lost at the Fall.

Now we have authority to continue His progressive victory over the evil one, culminating in making disciples of all ethnic groups (aka "*panta ta ethne*" in Greek). When we live under His principles, we are freed from the political powers of this world (Jn. 18:36), giving us confidence, faith, and rest (even in the midst of trials).

A Counterfeit Pronouncement

Throughout history, counterfeit pronouncements have masqueraded as truth, using verses from the Bible to distract the saints from Kingdom living. In our day, one of these preoccupations could be called "**#mybestlife**," an intense pursuit of personal happiness. In contrast to good news of a good King that produces confidence and faith, **#mybestlife** generates anxiety and broken relationships. The problem is that **#mybestlife** can sound consistent with Christ. But those who follow Jesus can discern truth from deception in four ways: aspirations, strategies, frustrations, and sources.

Aspirations

The first way to discern between these competing paradigms is to ask, "what are my hopes and dreams?" As citizens of His Kingdom our aspirations should align with Jesus. His hopes and dreams become our own. The objective of Jesus is to gather to a multi-ethnic family from every tribe, people, tongue and nation (Rev. 7:9). This passion is so strong that the very course of history will continue until His aspiration is fulfilled. He said this gospel of His Kingdom will be preached among *panta ta ethne* and then the end shall come (Mt. 24:14).

According to Jesus, the end does not come when prophetic fulfillments are realized on the geopolitical landscape, but only when the work of His Great Commission is completed, when disciples are made of *panta ta ethne* (Mt. 28:19). Since making disciples of all ethnic groups is Jesus' end game, we must share the same passion.

By contrast, the aspirations of **#mybestlife** are health, money, prestige, and fun. It is not wrong to desire these things, but they can become our consuming passion, dominating our thinking and sapping our strength. Before long we find ourselves under the tyranny of **#mybestlife**.

Strategies

The strategies of **#mybestlife** always connect to gaining (or retaining) power. They can include education, secure employment, fame, self-care, politics, or social action. Jesus' Kingdom strategies are different. Instead of seeking power, He prefers we invest in the lowest places; the poor, the prisoner, the hungry, the humble (Mt. 25:34ff, Lk. 4:18-19; Jn. 2:5). The slaves to **#mybestlife** strive for power, while followers of Jesus are free to release it by investing in those who cannot pay them back.

One version of **#mybestlife** is "if America can get back to its faith-filled roots, all will be well and I can be happy." While God has used America for *panta ta ethne*, the Bible teaches about the progression of Jesus' global Kingdom, not the universal expansion of any particular nation or system of government.

The same can be said about any political initiative seeking an ideal society. No culture can be perfected through social change because there is a persistent enemy who can be put down only by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Rev. 12:11). Neither conservatism nor progressivism can consummate His Kingdom.

Frustrations

Our true aspirations are revealed by our frustrations, the challenges that oppose what we want. The challenges to **#mybestlife** can be anything; an uncaring boss, a falling stock market, a lazy spouse, inflation, MAGA, the supply chain, wokeness, or a cable news story. People grind their teeth in frustration over anything that stands against their health, possessions, or recreation.

But when *panta ta ethne* is our aspiration, we have a different set of values. We find ourselves grieved by divisions and distractions among His people that tarnish Jesus' reputation outside of America. We wish Christian giving represented more than a 0.1%ⁱ investment in *panta ta ethne*, and less money catering to its members. We are frustrated

when more energy goes into protecting our way of life than it does making Jesus known to tribes who have never heard His name.

Sources

The final way to discern between the Kingdom and **#mybestlife** is to consider the source. The Kingdom message comes from the Biblical narrative, the story of Jesus (John 5:39), unchanging throughout history, solidified in the Church's creeds, and affirmed by the saints through the ages. It is a truth that is outside of me and my little world.

The source of **#mybestlife** comes from personal experience, an individual truth that is found within. **#mybestlife** encourages us to start with personal life experience, then view relationships with family, friends, country, and world from my personal experience. Conversely, Kingdom truth comes from outside my personal experience, rooted in Christ and His work in history. Jesus commands us to start with Him, and then order family, friends, country, and nation around His aspirations and strategies.

Response

If you are under the tyranny of **#mybestlife**, repent and return to a Kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28). Ask God how you can apply more energy to His aspirations, using His strategies. For example, urge your church to shift more funding to *panta ta ethne*, pray for an unengaged people group, or befriend an international student in your city. As you do, you will experience the refreshment of His yoke, which is easy and light (Mt. 11:28-29).

ⁱ <https://bethanygu.edu/blog/funding/why-missions-money-goes-to-wrong-place/>