

THY KINGDOM COME

When the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, crucified Jesus around 30AD he had a sign affixed to the top of the cross indicating his identity and his crime. INRI. Jesus of Nazareth. King of the Jews. It was a sign full of derision aimed at debasing the Jewish people and crushing their spirit. As if the Emperor himself was saying: “You have no king of your own other than Herod whom I appointed. I am Caesar. I am the Lord and Master in your lives. Oppose me and you too will find yourself hanging in ignominy like this poor fool.”

From the looks of things then, the Romans surely felt they were in complete control. What kind of king could this beggar of a man be? He had no money, no social status, no prestige, no influence, no military power. They would have been right—up to a point. Crush the opposition, ruthlessly. That was the Roman way. Then impose order and exact as much tax as possible and frighten the local populace into compliance. The Romans had no king. They had an ...Emperor. They had no kingdom. They had an Empire. The Roman Empire.

What did this Jesus have? Well. What seemed to be the case then is surely not the case now. One of the most important things Jesus revealed to us about his Father was that there is a Kingdom of God. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he included it in the prayer. “Thy kingdom come.” There is a kingdom. It is God’s kingdom. And Jesus is the Holy One of God. The One who comes from God to us. The Anointed One of God. The Messiah of God. The Son of God. And Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God often, dozens of times. He told illustrative parables about it. The Kingdom of God is like.... The Kingdom of Heaven is like....

The last of his teachings on the kingdom is this passage from Matthew’s Gospel. In it the Son of Man is sitting on his royal throne and judging all humankind. This parable presents a very nitty-gritty look at how God views us and life in this world. What are we to learn? First of all: what we do matters. How we are makes all the difference in the world. God makes his grace available to everyone but we must cooperate with that grace. We are to look for it—and Him.

From the Father’s viewpoint there are no throw-away human beings. None. No matter how wasted or bad or degraded or unwanted. There are none who do not count. How we relate to others, how we interact with others is the heart of Kingdom-life. Relationship. We will not take any money, power, prestige, status, influence, reputation into the next life. What we will take with us into the next life is the quality of our love—for God, for others. Or the lack of that quality, the lack of that love.

My friends, Jesus has come to reveal what we could never discern on our own. This life is fundamentally a mystery because the Kingdom of God is a mystery. It is not our task to try to turn the mystery into a problem which we solve and then rejoice in our own cleverness, skill and ingenuity. Life, and Kingdom-life, is a mystery. A mystery that is so much greater than we are. We are to become little before the mystery, like children, and then humbly ask to enter into the

mystery, thankful for the invitation, entrusting ourselves into God's love allowing his love to enfold us.

Sometimes we find ourselves wondering why all the suffering and why does God allow all the suffering and then, does God really care? It is an ancient question. Ezekiel answered it. God cares. God is like a shepherd caring for the flock. He tends, he pastures, he seeks out the lost, he gives rest to the weary, he heals the wounded. God cares. But we must ask God to help us to see.

Saint Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And confirms the most basic belief. Christ has been raised from the dead. Yes, sin came to every human being through the sin of one man, Adam. But life comes, and comes in much greater abundance, through one man also, Jesus Christ. And it is this same Jesus Christ to whom God the Father has entrusted all judgment—precisely because in his incarnation the Son of God has shared every aspect of our human life except committing sin.

All the readings point to God and God's activity and God's kingdom-life. And it can be summed up in five words. Open your hand. Say one word for each finger.

Jesus says: I did it for you.

Jesus says at the consecration: This my body. For you.

I say: He did it for me. He tasted death for me. He rose up for me.

We say: He did it for us. He died for us all. He rose for us all.

We say: We live for Him always.

We say: We live for them always.

We say: His Kingdom is at hand.

God's kingdom is mystery but it is simple too. It is available to us. And the One we love, Jesus, reigns in that kingdom. He would like us to be with him. So right now let's say once again our five words: "Yes, we love you Lord"

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.