

Thy Kingdom Come

Mark 1:14-15

March 7, 2021

A little boy was sitting next to a holy man seated beside the Ganghes River. "Will you teach me to pray?" the boy asked. "Are you sure that you want to learn?" the holy man asked? "Yes, of course."

With that the holy man grabbed the boy's neck and plunged his head into the water. He held them there while the boy kicked and screamed and tried to get away.

Finally, after an interminable period the holy man let the boy out of the water. "What was that?" the boy asked. "That was your first lesson in prayer. When you long for God the way that you longed to breathe, then you will be able to pray." How do we pray?

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"Teach us to pray" one of his disciples said to Jesus. He did not grabbed his neck and plunge his head into the sea of Galilee, for sure.

To his disciples, according to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said, "when you pray, say: Father, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."

This prayer Jesus taught us is not meant to be recited every Sunday morning during the worship time. It is meant to pray with a deepest sense of sincerity out of the bottom of our heart.

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Last Sunday we learned the first prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." We learned God's name is neither Harold nor Howard.

We learned acknowledging Holy God as our Creator and Sustainer and had a chance to commit ourselves giving reverence and honor and glory to God that God's name deserves.

Today, we pay attention on the second petition, "Thy Kingdom Come" Jesus taught us to pray that the kingdom of God come on earth as it is in heaven.

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Mark 1:14 and 15 read, "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Jesus' ministry is about bringing in the kingdom of God.

Jesus was talking about the Kingdom of God over and over. He mentioned it over 110 times in the Bible.

His earthly ministry is about the kingdom of God and so is his message.

Matthew used the word, "the kingdom of heaven" which has the same meaning with "the kingdom of God" because his readers were mainly Jewish people who considered God's name too holy to be spoken by human lips. So Matthew replaced the name of God with heaven.

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What will God's "kingdom" look like? Not like any of the kingdoms we see in our day in this world.

Many times, Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is like this" or "the kingdom of heaven is like that," and those descriptions show something very different from any government or nation or empire we have ever seen.

The word, "The kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven" means literally the reign of God. To pray "Thy kingdom come" does ask for God to take in charge and be at the center of life and events.

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We are admitting that there is still so much wrong in this world and God's rule is not complete in this world yet.

By praying, "Thy Kingdom come," we are asking for a major change on this earth.. an end to war, and end to poverty, an end to oppression, an end to evil of every sort.

Someone has said that this prayer is for the prayer of people who are not content with things as they are and who over and over ask, "What is wrong with this world?" and are urgently anxious to see things made right. "Thy kingdom come, Father. We know this world is mess. There is no love, no justice, no peace. Take in charge and do bring your love, justice and peace on earth as it is in heaven."

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But praying "Thy Kingdom come" we do not just ask God doing God's work. By praying "Thy Kingdom come," we make our own promise that, as the disciples of Jesus, we are willing to cooperate and do our won part in making God's rule a reality. Yes, if we pray for "Thy Kingdom come", we ought to be willing to work for it.

Do you know what Jesus did right after proclaiming, "The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the Good News." ? He called Peter, Andrew, James and John, four fishermen to follow him. Why? Jesus invited them to join his Kingdom of God ministry. Jesus intentionally welcomed them to participate at his Kingdom of God ministry.

Who are we? We are Kingdom's builders, working in partnership with God who still is at work in our midst.

Luke 17:20-21

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."

So to pray “Thy kingdom come” does not ask for an end to history or for heaven to suddenly replace this earth. Jesus responded to the Pharisees’ question by saying: “the kingdom of God is already in the midst of you. The kingdom of God is already happening, all around you, because I have come.”

“Where are you, God?” One day a man shouted out, looking up the sky. Let me see you. I want to see you? There appeared a hand out of the cloud and its index finger pointed something down in the village. The man followed a place the finger pointed and found a church with steeple. God is with us and among us and God is at work in our midst.

Then, there is a question we need to ask ourselves this morning. How are we helping God’s Kingdom to come closer in our midst? What is our piece of action?

Let me remind you of one of the Kingdom of God parables Jesus taught. He said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32)

The kingdom of God comes like small mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds growing and welcoming the birds.

I am reminded of the Peace Prayer by St. Francis of Assisi. I think it is what we can do to be part of God’s kingdom ministry on earth.

Lord make me an instrument of your peace

Where there is hatred,
Let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error, truth;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, Joy.

A small seed of love, pardon, truth, faith, hope, light and joy we sow one day at a time and one person at a time will help the kingdom of God expanding and growing among us.

We, Kingdom builders are called to grab the Kingdom opportunities any time and any where. Wherever love melts cold heart and brings unity in Jesus' name, the Kingdom comes. Wherever forgiveness happens in Jesus' name, the Kingdom comes. Wherever justice is promoted in Jesus' name, the Kingdom comes. Wherever human suffering is alleviated in Jesus' name, the Kingdom comes.

Whenever strangers are welcomed in Jesus' name, the Kingdom of God comes. Wherever respecting and honoring one another as sisters and brothers, the Kingdom comes. Wherever and whenever racial discrimination stops, the Kingdom comes. Wherever reaching out to and sharing with generosity with sisters and brothers in poverty and hunger, the Kingdom comes.

People over 55 years old are busy setting up an appointment for vaccination these days. Have you scheduled for your vaccination? The other day, I learned that someone had reached out to someone who had difficult and hard time to set up an appointment and helped her to get vaccinated. I saw the kingdom of God in our midst. Thy kingdom comes anytime and anywhere a loving act of kindness takes place.

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Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come." Is it our prayer from the bottom of our heart? Is it your prayer? Is it mine?

Today we are invited to take the bread and the cup at the communion. By joining the Holy Communion, we are reminded that we are Jesus' followers who have been part of Jesus' Kingdom ministry.

So we once again pray, "Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me. Fill me, melt me, mold me, use me, that Thy Kingdom come in our midst. Amen.