

Sunday, January 22, 2012

3 Sunday B
Kingdom of God

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

“The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1: 15).



The good news is that the Kingdom of God is at hand. It is not only in some future time. It is not down the road or around the corner. It is at hand!

In the earliest traditions, the Kingdom of God was identified with the people of Israel and with their kings, their monarchies. As such, the Kingdom had a political as well as a spiritual flavor.

Again and again, however, their kings disappointed them and so the people began to look increasingly to a future Kingdom of God. Jesus, however, appears on the scene and proclaims that the Kingdom is at hand. This teaching was shocking for the people. It was a shattering for them.

For us twenty-first century people, this teaching continues to be a shattering. We look at our world, our church, our planet with all the breakdowns, violence, chaos, sufferings, and injustices. We find it difficult to find God's Kingdom within all this bad news. The teaching that the Kingdom is at hand can be a challenging teaching for us.

In Jesus' time the king was Herod, and Herod's boss was the emperor Caesar. Herod's kingdom and Caesar's empire were based on domination, a domination that resulted in oppression, poverty, and a diminishment of hope for the people.

The Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus was one of harmonious relationships, relationships that resulted in well-being, fullness of life, and an increase of hope for the people.

As bad as the domination of Caesar was in Jesus' time, it pales when placed side by side with the bad news of our twenty-first century, a century in which killing is taking place on a planetary scale.

We have always had homicide and genocide, but this killing of each other seems to be on the increase around our world both in the previous and the present century. What is new in our time is the form of killing called geocide and biocide.

Examples of geocide are warming of the atmosphere, melting of the ice caps, erosion of the soils, and pollution of the waters. Examples of biocide are loss of biodiversity, extinction of species, increase in

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cancers, and weakening of immune systems.

All of the above-mentioned pathologies seem to add up to what can be called a hellish existence for each of us, for all of us. All of the above seems to be the opposite of God's Kingdom, the opposite of what is life giving, the opposite of deep connections, and the opposite of harmonious relationships.

How often we pray "Thy Kingdom come on Earth..." It is no accident that all of us who utter this prayer are living at this present time. It is clear that we are called to be incarnations, enfleshments, of the Kingdom. We are called to nurture harmonious relationships in our personal lives, in our church, in our country, between nation states, and within the precious community of life here on our precious Earth.

To the extent that we respond to this call, we will be nurturing an increase in well-being, an increase in the fullness of life, and most importantly an increase in hope!