

'KINGDOM OF GOD' – HOMILY – 20 NOVEMBER 2016

We may or may not relate to the image of king.
But we do pray regularly in the "Our Father" the petition,
"Your kingdom come" or "Thy kingdom come"

Today is the Solemnity of "Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe".
Some will remember it as "Christ the King".
Pope Pius XI instituted this celebration in 1925, in a world still recovering from deaths and destruction in the First World War of 1914-18, from the deaths caused by the Spanish Influenza, and now concerned about developing trends.

I have found Luke's Gospel inspirational over my lifetime, as I ponder my shortcomings and the messiness of our world. Welcoming the joy of God's love.

People have shared over the years about their insights into Luke's Gospel.
Some of those insights have reflected on -

*Loving God, being loved by God, the depth of god's love,
Faith, justice, peace, mercy, birth, relationships, commitment,
Solidarity, equality, community, sacrifice, lifestyle,
Meaning of Christmas, meaning of Easter, eternal life,
Listening, grieving, perseverance, the meaning of the cross,
Carrying the cross, healing, hope, empathy, joy, gender equality, disability,
Dignity, option for the poor and oppressed, witness, marriage,
Reconciliation, celebration, the relationship between kingdom and church now,
Holiness, grace, discipleship, prayer, Eucharist, trust,
Challenge, mission, humility, baptism, forgiveness,
Promptings of the Holy Spirit, wonders of God's creation,
Faithfulness of God to us, presence of God in our lives,
Living the Good News, silence, prophetic call,
Endurance, anointing, call, discernment, openness to God's Word,
God accompanying us on our journey, true freedom,
Welcome, hospitality, loving neighbour, growth, compassion.*

For example, conversations with Aboriginal People, about the Mission of Jesus in Luke Chapter 4, as it concerns Indigenous perspectives.

The Holy Spirit guides us to welcome the kingdom of God into our lives,
Whether in 1925 or today in the 21st Century - all those dimensions above are part of it.

HOW CAN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In Luke 4:43 Jesus says,

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."

“Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women ...” Luke 8:1-2

ACCOMPANYING JESUS, SENT ON MISSION, HEALING

Luke names some of the women who have been healed and accompany Jesus in this purpose of proclaiming.

Mary, called Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna.

Jesus sent the twelve,

“out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.” Luke 9:2

“They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.” Luke 9:6

Jesus debriefs them on return from mission, but the crowds find him and Jesus welcomes them.

“He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.” Luke 9:11

We now have been introduced to the ‘Good News’ (gospel) and healing dimensions of the Kingdom of God. Jesus models this to others who accompany him, including women who are named, and later sends the twelve on a mission out to share in this purpose and debriefs them. ACCOMPANYING and MISSION.

TEMPTATION

In one of the temptations earlier in Luke 4:5-7, the devil showed Jesus

“In an instant all the kingdoms of the world” and said,

“To you I will give their glory and all this authority” on the condition that,
“If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours”.

Jesus replied,

‘It is written “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him” ‘

Jesus is not preaching the kingdoms of the world, but the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is not preaching greed for power and glory and idols and false worship, but to WORSHIP and SERVE GOD ALONE.

And it is GOOD NEWS, meant to be shared.

Jesus WELCOMES us to the journey of the GOOD NEWS.

And HEALING accompanies it.

MISSION and GOOD NEWS:

Again in Luke chapter 4, Jesus tells us about his Mission and the Good News, as he read from the scroll,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

Because he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Proclaiming the Kingdom of God is **HANDS ON**.
Making a difference now.

We could compile a list of what the **KINGDOM OF GOD** is about.

LOVE:

To inherit eternal life, Jesus in Luke 10:27-28 affirms the response of the person who stated,
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.”

Jesus gives depth to this by highlighting love of neighbour, in a parable of the Good Samaritan.

MUSTARD SEED, LEAVEN, LITTLE CHILD:

Jesus used images to explain the kingdom. Like a mustard seed. Like leaven in bread.

- Luke 13:18-19 - Like a mustard seed, that someone planted. It grew into tree, where birds could nest.
- Luke 13:20-21 - Like yeast mixed with flour. It leavened all of it.

These are Images of growth, of making a difference, and yet of humility too.

- In Luke 18:17 Jesus said, ***“whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it”***.

Receive in the sense of welcome.

We welcome the Kingdom of God into our lives.

HOLY SPIRIT, WITNESSES

Luke in Acts of the Apostles 1:3 tells us that the Risen Jesus continued to speak to the disciples about the Kingdom of God for 40 days and promised in Acts of the Apostles 1:8 that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and make them witnesses.

There is so much more to say in Luke’s Gospel and Acts of the Apostles.
This will be covered in another homily.

JESUS and the REPENTANT CRIMINAL

We return to today’s Gospel passage in Luke 23:39-43.

Jesus is on the cross. They crucified Jesus

“... there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.” Luke 23:33

The inscription on the cross said ***“This is the King of the Jews”***. Luke 23:38.

The soldiers mock Jesus, challenging him to prove he is KING of the Jews.

“One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.” Luke 23:39.

The word is stronger than “deride- it is part of the verb to blaspheme.

The criminal is blaspheming him.

The other criminal on the cross defends Jesus who has done nothing wrong.

Then he says to Jesus,

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”. Luke 23:42

He not only defends Jesus, but speaks of Jesus’ Kingdom.

He knows Jesus is dying, yet realises that Jesus will enter the kingdom.

And he wants to be remembered.
A disciple in Luke's Gospel journeys with Jesus.
Jesus welcomes him to journey with him into Paradise. Today.
He will be with Jesus.
Even though in great suffering, Jesus ministers to the repentant criminal.

THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD, HOW ARE WE WOUNDER HEALERS?

We have already seen earlier that healing accompanies the proclaiming of God's Kingdom.
Jesus heals the repentant criminal of his inner torments.
The mission of Jesus continues on the cross, accompanying the repentant thief,
who will enter Paradise. Today.

We proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God by **LIVING IT.**
WE WELCOME THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

And like the Twelve Apostles, we come back regularly to God in prayer for debriefing.
As Luke in the Acts of Apostles shows, the Holy Spirit will show us.

St Paul in his Letter to the Romans 14:17 said,
*"For the kingdom of God is not food or drink
But righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit".*

We pray that the Holy Spirit will show us how to welcome the Kingdom of God more and
more into our lives.

We pray that we live the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

Amen.

Fr Gerry Hefferan – 'Kingdom of God' – 20 November 2016

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