The Kingdom of God is in Your Midst

Luke 17:20-37

Luke 17: 21 “…nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is,’ or ‘There!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” (ESV)

What is the big question of your life? What is the most important issue in your life? In today’s passage Jesus draws our attention to the coming of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the main theme of the Bible. From the beginning to the end, Jesus focused on the kingdom of God. Jesus proclaimed the coming kingdom of God. He taught the kingdom of God through many parables. He raised his disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God. Jesus wants us to be Kingdom-centered. I pray that the kingdom of God may become our first priority.

**1. The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you!**

Look at verses 20-21. Some Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. It should not surprise us that the Pharisees asked about the kingdom of God. They heard Jesus teach about the kingdom of God. We can guess that they longed to be freed from foreign oppression of Rome. They loathed paying taxes to Caesar, and hated Roman authorities who even appointed the Jewish high priests. They longed for a king like David to lead them to victory over Rome and restore their nation’s glory. Probably they thought about the prophecies in Isaiah or Daniel, who gave the vision of God’s kingdom. The Pharisees were looking forward to this time because they were expecting a political overthrow of Rome and restoration of Israel.

But they had some serious misunderstanding of the Kingdom of God. So Jesus corrected them when they asked him about the kingdom of God: “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation.” They carefully observed current events to detect the signs that the kingdom of God was coming. Down through the generations, many people have been like the Pharisees who sought some miraculous signs. They tried to perceive the coming of the kingdom through careful observation. Some had made predictions about the dates. Also recently, one person predicted that Jesus would come on a certain date. What is really ridiculous is that they have gained many followers through their deceptive assertions. But Jesus clearly said, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation.” Those who study the Bible with a spectator’s attitude like Pharisees will miss the point and fall into Satan’s trap. So you must not say, “Here it is,” or “There it is! “ In other words, the Kingdom of God is not a specific location that people can point to. It cannot be the result of a social movement or political revolution.

Jesus goes on to say, “**The kingdom of God is within you**.” As many other good translations do, we can translate these last two words “within you” with “**among you**” or “**in the midst of you**” (ESV). This is saying that the kingdom of God you are looking to come has already arrived and is in your presence. The kingdom of God is present today. Luke’s gospel points out the current presence of the kingdom of God. Jesus was exercising the authority and manifesting the purposes of the kingdom of God. Jesus says in Luke11:20, “**But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you**.” Luke16:16-17 say, “**The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it**.” When Jesus healed the sick and overcame Satan’s evil power in people’s lives, the kingdom of God has come to us. When Jesus proclaimed the forgiveness of sins for us, he has brought the kingdom of God into our lives. Wherever Jesus released the oppressed and bound, and saved souls, he manifested the authority and power of God. The kingdom of God is present because Jesus the King of the kingdom is present.

Man who lost paradise has a primeval longing for its restoration. So people have tried in many ways to make a paradise on earth. Communism promised economic equality through the elimination of the class struggle. But it failed miserably. In the past, many people from many nations wanted to come to America, thinking that America is paradise, “the kingdom of God.” But recent events clearly reveal that America is not paradise. Human efforts to establish the kingdom of God have all failed. Despite all these, many think it is most urgent to improve their situation: to enter the best school, to marry the right person, to land the right job, and so on.

Jesus challenges us and invites us to the kingdom of God in Jesus. Pharisees looked dignified and special because they were well educated and disciplined. But they lived under the power of sin and death, because they didn’t have the kingdom of God in their hearts. How can we have the kingdom of God in our lives?

In Mark 1:15, Jesus said, “**The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news**!” When Jesus is near, the kingdom of God is near. When Jesus comes into our hearts we have the kingdom of God in our hearts. When we repent of our sins, we have the kingdom of God. To repent means first of all to change your way of thinking.

Jesus said, “**The kingdom of God is in your midst!**” “**The kingdom of God is in your grasp**!” Hold on to Jesus! When you repent and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, God’s reign begins in your hearts. Where Jesus is, there is the kingdom of God! Jesus brings the kingdom of God into your life. The kingdom of God is present today because Jesus is present in the church through the Holy Spirit. This presence of God’s kingdom should affect our expectations and our prayers. We can still experience God’s kingdom being manifested in healing the sick, overcoming evil, releasing the oppressed and bound. Jesus transforms your life. God’s kingdom is invisible but powerful in transformation. Hatred is replaced with God’s love. Arrogance subsides, and a humble spirit governs. Bitterness becomes thanksgiving. Sorrow turns to joy. Fears dissipate before a new courage. Selfishness gives way to a loving kindness. Weakness is turned to strength. You become new creations in Christ Jesus, though your outer circumstances may not change much. The kingdom starts within you who believe in Jesus.

When Jesus says the kingdom of God is present or in your midst, he doesn’t mean the full manifestation of God’s rule. Though the kingdom of God is within us, we are not immune to the troubles of the world. We want always glory, success, and victory. But sometimes, we experience trials that can rob us of peace and joy. Sometimes, we just get tired. At such times, we just need to focus on Jesus who went the way of the cross. Jesus gives peace to our souls. With Jesus in our hearts we can persevere in trials, smile amid troubles, and go through life with a song in our hearts.

**2. The Son of Man will be like the Lightening**

The kingdom of God we experience today is only a foretaste of what is to come in great intensity and power. The fullness takes place when Jesus comes again. He says to his disciples that the time will come when they “long to see one of the days of the Son of Man.” The disciples were not looking for the things in this world. Their desire was for the return of Jesus Christ. But there may be a delay before Jesus returns. In the meantime, Christians could be susceptible to false prophets and false reports of Jesus’ return: “There he is” or “Here he is” (23). But nobody will need to inform anyone of the return of Jesus. Why not? Look at verse 24 “For the Son of Man in his day will be like lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.” Jesus coming will be both sudden and public. In other words, “Do not listen to cult groups (like Jehovah’s witnesses) who teach that Jesus returned but most people missed it.”

Jesus says in verse 25, that the Son of Man “first must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” It is a reminder that Jesus did not come the first time to wear a crown, but to be crucified. The first time Jesus came, he came to die in our place, but the second time he comes, he will come to rule. We live in between the times. We still have an opportunity to come into His kingdom by receiving Jesus and placing our faith in Him.

**3. That day will be like in the days of Noah and Lot.**

The great event of Jesus' coming will usher in the kingdom of God in a universal way. It will be the end of all evil and unrighteousness. This event will affect every person who has ever lived. Look at verses 26-27. "**Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all**." The things people were doing were not bad; they were normal human activities. Noah's family members were doing the same things. However, Noah heeded God's warning and built an ark in obedience to God's word to save his family. He tried to warn the people of his time, but they paid no attention. They were consumed by their sinful desires. Their intentional spiritual ignorance did not delay the flood. The flood came as God had warned and destroyed them all.
Jesus gave another example of Lot. Look at verses 28-29. "**It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all**." These historical events show that God's judgment came according to his word. Those who lived only for the flesh perished suddenly.

Life will go on as usual until suddenly and unexpectedly judgment comes. “The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1Thess5:2). People tend to expect some prior warnings, some gradual change indicating the end is near. But the final judgment will not happen like the warning light in your car which indicates low fuel. It will not be like the weather man telling us to expect tornados or hurricane in the next 48 hours. The final judgment will come suddenly and unexpectedly like an earthquake. It could happen anytime. It may occur as you are shopping for groceries, watching a football game. It may begin on the very day you get a raise or promotion.

People might ignore and even laugh at the idea of a sudden, unexpected, and apocalyptic judgment. The Bible warns about just such an attitude. Jesus’ talk about judgment is a critical reminder that God does hold us responsible for our actions. Those who recognize their accountability to God will go through life with holy fear. We must realize that the unbelieving world is godless and that it suppresses the truth. It gives off an insidious influence. It can be compared to people trying to enjoy a wild party on a sinking ship, such as the Titanic. But that day will come! We must heed Jesus' promise of his glorious coming. We can do so when we meditate on the word of God and pray continually.

**4. Remember Lot’ Wife!**
How then should Jesus’ disciples live? First of all, **we must live as holy pilgrims**, not too attached to the things in this world. Look at verse 31. “**On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything**.” In drastic situations such as an invading army, people needed to have their priorities straight and be focused on escaping. If one tried to save their material goods, he would lose his life.

V32 says, **Remember Lot’s wife**!” Mrs. Lot did not escape the judgment upon Sodom because she looked back. Mrs. Lot thought about her business, her new house, and lovely garden. She lingered. She clung to Sodom just as long as she could! She looked back and she became a pillar of salt. Her focus was on the things of the world. She didn’t have her priorities straight, focusing on the things of the world. The world has death grip on our hearts.

Jesus knows our hearts and so warns us of that danger in verse 33: “Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.” The person who tries to hold on to worldly things like possessions, pleasures, position, will lose his life in the judgment to come, but the one who “loses his life”, that is, doesn’t cling to worldly things, will preserve his life. The point Jesus is making is this: “In view of the coming kingdom of God, keep your priorities straight.” We must always remember that we are holy pilgrims in the world. We cannot live here forever. We are aliens and strangers in the world (1Pet2:11). We Christians exist as resident aliens. Your visa will expire some day. We are just passing through to the kingdom of God. Modern culture is devoid of a sense of journey, of adventure. Here is not our home. The USA is not the kingdom of God, but our mission field. Jesus’ people must give their lives for their holy mission. Jesus boldly gave his life for God’s holy mission on a daily basis. He went the way of the mission to the point of death on the cross to give us the kingdom of God. Jesus wants us to follow in his footsteps. When we lose our lives for Jesus and the gospel, we really save them.

We learned about the coming kingdom of God. What is your first priority on your agenda? Today is where God is concerned. Today is where He wants to meet you, provide for you. Are you prepared for the coming kingdom of God today? When we repent and call on Jesus, God’s kingdom can abide within us. Blessed are you who have Jesus in your heart. May God bless each of us to walk before the great Judge of the living and the dead! May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation!