

The Coming Of The Kingdom Of God
Luke 17:20-30
Archibald Wallace

There is a story of two older people marrying for a second time each, who were stunned to learn on the night of their marriage that things were not as they seemed. His teeth were in a glass by the bathroom sink and her wig was hooked over the bedpost at the foot of the bed. The story goes on with other discoveries, but you get the gist. Things on that wedding night were not what was expected.

As a boy I loved a radio show called the "Lone Ranger." I never missed and I was so excited the day my mother took me to the station in New Orleans for the show at 4 pm, When the elevator door opened, I heard the show beginning and I ran down the hall to the studio where the sound was coming from and I looked in the window, and I saw the Lone Ranger—a record, going round and round. It was not what I expected.

Today, we are going to look at a text not included in the Lectionary and seldom preached. Why it's passed over in the Lectionary, I don't know, but it shouldn't be. It should be preached often. It talks about a part of Scripture no one got right then and seldom is it really understood now. It is a story about the Kingdom of God and what it means and where it is and when it starts. Jesus talked about it frequently; Luke wrote about it, and the Pharisees, who were the "fact checkers" of their day trying to catch Jesus in a lie, were testing Jesus to see if he understood it the way they understood it. They had an idea of what the Kingdom of God ought to be -- they imagined a real Kingdom, one with land, and flags, and an army, one that would knock out the Romans who occupied their land and send them packing back to Rome. They imagined a Kingdom so big and powerful that nothing could stop it; and it was to be headed by a king who would come to them riding a mighty war horse and who would rule in power.

And they were wrong, wrong, and wrong! They believed their version and didn't realize they had imposed their plan on God's plan for God's Kingdom throughout the first half of the Bible.

In today's text from Luke 19 the Pharisees ask Jesus about the Kingdom of God he kept talking about. They had heard Jesus say repeatedly, Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!" And they thought army, victory, might and power, and they couldn't see any of it. Let's let Jesus speak for himself on this one:

Luke 17: 20-30---Read

The Word of the Lord!

Jesus answered all of their questions.

He told them the Kingdom of God was not something they could see, that it didn't have borders, that it wasn't confined to a space, or a place.

Jesus told them it was a real kingdom and it was coming and it was already here. This sounded like nonsense to them. Here and coming! How could it already be and not seen and yet was coming? Then Jesus added these simple words:

v 21—"the Kingdom is already in your midst."

Jesus was telling them the answer to everything they were asking; he was saying that he brought the Kingdom, that it had started with him at the time of his Baptism, and that it was real and alive and developing. He was telling them the Kingdom of God lived in his disciples and converts, who joined the Kingdom when they heard and repented. This kingdom included anyone and everyone who had accepted Jesus

as Lord and Savior,

as the way,

as the truth and

as the light that illumined the world and led them through it.

The Kingdom of God was at hand all-right—it had happened already and they had missed it, because it was Jesus himself that brought it, ushered it in, and began the process of inviting citizens to join. The kingdom was alive and well.

As the Pharisees left the stage, they were faced with the truth that Jesus was not what they expected, not what they had grafted onto the plans and promises God had made about the coming one, this Son of Man. The Pharisees faced a difficult decision: accept Jesus as he revealed himself to them and admit they had missed what God had promised, that they had re-written God's plan of a coming suffering servant into a coming mighty warrior King, or risk losing everything. If they agreed with Jesus, they would have to confess they were wrong. So they just went away, and they didn't change, and they missed the Kingdom of God as it passed by. Do I really need to preach the sermon that it here about us? Do I need to tell you that we too miss Jesus passing by – the real Jesus. Do I really need to point out how we have changed Jesus and the Kingdom of God to fit our own expectations?

The disciples got it and the text shows they were processing what Jesus had said. Jesus told them a second truth about the Kingdom of God. The truth was this: that he, the bringer and establisher of the Kingdom, the Son of Man, first revealed in Ezekiel in the Old Testament, was going to have to leave them. He even told them that before he went, he would suffer many things and be rejected by these same leaders of the church that had just been there, but that he would return.

The second part of this passage is about the return of Christ. Jesus was telling his disciples that the Kingdom of God had begun and would continue and that ultimately he would return. He then gave them some practical advice. He told them to be on guard, that many would say he has come, here he is or there he is. But Jesus said, don't be taken in by those who claim they know or have seen or heard. Jesus said he had a better sign, so they would know for sure that it was He who was returning, a sign that couldn't be missed by anyone. It would be so noticeable and clear that it would be like lightning, lighting up the sky, an event that all would be able to see and know what was coming.

The disciples listened and wondered and they asked when? Jesus answered that the day and the timing would be unexpected, that people would be doing the normal things of living

and that it would come quickly and completely. There are passages in Scripture that give us clues---signs, if you will. It wouldn't happen until:

The Gospel has been taken to the entire world. Isaiah 66:19

The restoration of Israel and the return of God's people scattered across the world through successive diasporas. Ezekiel 37

A number of identified and as yet to come Empires had come and gone.

The nations were at war, and there were rumors of other wars.

There would be famine and pestilence in the world.

Does that sound familiar? Have you read the newspaper lately?.

It has in other times too.

But now, many of the signs are here again.

Jesus said, when the time is right --God's time--Christ, the Son of Man, will return, and bring rescue and judgment. Some will be taken and some will be spared, some will live and some will be left, and then the end will be completed -salvation and punishment. All without warning other than the signs!

Isn't it amazing that nothing that has ever happened in this world has not been explained to us and prophesied for us.

So how should live in the interim between this moment when Christ has already come and his Second coming?

Expectantly --knowing what's coming, praying for it, preparing for it,
looking for it everyday.

Patiently --not giving up because it didn't happen today or tomorrow

Prayerfully--keeping in-touch with God on a daily basis, in the good times and the bad.

Thankfully--that God loves us so much that God has provided a rescue, who is the Son of Man, our Christ, who died that we might live

Opportunistically--seeking every day opportunities to tell the world of the Christ we know, of the Christ who has made such a difference in our lives, of the Christ who is coming soon

The Kingdom of God has already come,

and it is growing,

and it awaits the return of its bringer.

So now you know what Christ meant when he said the Kingdom of God is in your midst

Genesis 19: 15-26

- 15 With the coming of dawn the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your
Two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished."
16 when he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and his two daughters
and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.
17 As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, "Flee for our lives! Don't look back!
And, don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away."
.....
23 By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land.
24 Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the
heavens.
25 Thus, He overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—
And also the vegetation in the land.
26 But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Luke 17:20-30

- 20 Once on being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come,
Jesus replied, "The coming of the Kingdom of God is not something that can be observed,
21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is (already) in your
midst."
22 Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of
the Son of Man, but you will not see it.
23 People will tell you, 'There He is.' Or, 'Here he is.'
Do not go running off after them.
24 For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky
from one end to another.
25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.
27 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.
28 It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting
And building.
29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.
30 It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.