

Homily For Tuesday of the 30th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM & 7:00 PM Mass - October 29, 2019

Romans 8:18-25 "If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

Psalms 126 "The Lord has done great things for us. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy."

Luke 13:18-21 "The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It became a tree for the birds to nest. "

What Is the Kingdom of God Like?

Introduction

What is the Kingdom of God like? It is a question Christians might well ask, and should be asking. Jesus is probably just answering that same question for the hundredth time: " At the time, people were greatly interested in the reality of that existence.

Psalm

If we look back to get a glimpse of how the Hebrew scriptures, the scriptures of Jesus, we see that the Kingdom was very much tied to the ongoing fortunes and misfortunes of the people of Israel. There are two images in the psalm. One is survival amidst the nations around them. Is the Lord doing great things for his people? Were the other nations saying, "The Lord has done great things for them?" If so, then there would be rejoicing in Israel at how God's glory was being manifested. The other image the psalmist used was agricultural. "Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves." Joy is how the kingdom is experienced when the harvest is plentiful.

Romans

If we look 25 years ahead of Jesus' death and resurrection, Paul wrote his letter to the Church at Rome, maybe the most influential letter of all time. St. Paul would also give some attention to the question of what the future would hold. He also used several images. The first was based in the fact of a persecuted Church. Paul begins by defining the present as an era of suffering, but one that pales in

comparison to the coming glory, to the salvation at the end of time, which would be preceded by a great time of suffering.

St. Paul's second image is to compare the future coming kingdom with the rest of the created order. Creation is in a kind of slavery, in bondage and subject to decay since sin came into the world through an act of disobedience towards God.

Because of that, creation itself experiences a kind of futility. It can do nothing but groan in a kind of seemingly endless painful childbirth experience while it waits to be set free. Some see in this pain Jesus' own suffering on the cross..

But that isn't the end of the story. The "children of God," those who have hope in the resurrection, are suffering along with creation, groaning in labour pains and waiting to be set free. That's the coming kingdom. It's a kind of glorious freedom, from decay and suffering. Until that time, believers also participate in the birth pangs as they await bodily resurrection.

Luke

I'm guessing that at least half of us can't directly relate to giving birth, so we go back to how Jesus answers the question. One of the first times I saw Drumheller, Alberta's summer production of the Passion Play, there was a scene which changed my perception of Jesus' teaching. It always seemed to me from the Gospels that he had these ready prepared answers to questions and situations.

But, in the play, It was he and a few of the disciples, men and women, relaxing outdoors on the porch after having just shared a meal together, just chatting. One of the women asks, "Tell us, Lord, about the Kingdom of God. Looking around for an image to use, Jesus said, How shall I describe the kingdom of God like? And picking a seed off the bush right beside where he is sitting, he declares, "It is like a mustard seed that someone sowed in the garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

Jesus looks for things close by to make the comparisons to the coming and present kingdom. It's like those things only so much more. It's like yeast that leavens the flour to make bread. For us, this might bring to our mind how we bring bread to the altar. We bring a sacrifice to God, which symbolizes our work.

God doesn't need that sacrifice, but we bring it to him and he transforms it into the gift of himself, Jesus body and blood, which becomes our spiritual food. That's the kingdom of God.

Call to Action

We are invited again, under new circumstances, to ponder the Kingdom of God. Compare our present suffering to future glory. Bondage versus freedom. Futility and decay versus the children of God. Hope in what is seen versus what is unseen.

Creation images abound but ultimately, it is hope in what we cannot see with our eyes. That is what makes it so amazing. We can't even imagine what God has in store for us. It requires patience for us, but it will be a birth to a new creation which we are invited to experience today at mass.