

THE KINGDOM

By Gerry Pierse

What is the “Kingdom of God” or “Reign of God”?

1. The concept of the “Kingdom of God”, or the “Reign of God”, is mentioned in the Bible about 150 times.
2. One answer to the question “Why did Jesus come on earth?” is that “He came to preach the Kingdom”.
3. He never clearly defined the Kingdom because it is more *an attitude of heart* than anything else. It’s a God-oriented way of being, a convergence of God’s plan and human activity.
4. The nearest definition is in Romans 14:17 where St. Paul says the Kingdom is not a matter of whether you get what you like, especially of what you like to eat and drink, but the Kingdom is a matter of *justice, peace and joy*.

Can the Kingdom be earned or lost?

1. One essential of the Kingdom is that it is not something that we can earn; nor is the Kingdom something that we can lose.
2. Our Father in heaven cannot be captured by our goodness, or lost by our badness.
3. This insight came to me in a personal way as I was reflecting on my life.
 - a. There were times when I had a lot of turmoil and struggle, maybe sexual and other kinds of struggle. I was not too pleased with myself, or with how I was dealing with it. I felt I was bad.
 - b. And there have been other times in my life when I felt a great serenity and felt that I was good.
 - c. The thing that struck me was this – that God loved me as much when I felt I was bad, as when I felt I was good.
 - d. God loves the saint and the sinner equally. The only difference is: the saint knows it and the sinner does not.
4. The sin of Judas and the sin of Peter were almost the same. But the difference was that Peter could still believe that Jesus loved him; Judas could not, so he literally committed suicide.
5. There is only one thing that can keep the love of God out of our lives, and that is the belief that we are not loved.
6. In the story of the prodigal son, the younger son asks for his share of the inheritance.
 - a. He leaves the father – and goes off and squanders the inheritance on wine, women, and song.
 - b. When he is at the very bottom, he comes to his senses. He comes back to his own centre, including his feelings, and he says, “I will go back. I don’t deserve to be my father’s son. I’ll ask to be a servant”.
 - c. However, he underestimates his father, because his father just loves him and welcomes him back because of his *sonship* – and not because of his behaviour. His being loved by the father did not depend on his performance. He was loved because he was a child.
7. We are loved because we are the children of God.
 - a. We are not loved because we are holy, because we are good, or so on.
 - b. So whatever you have done, realize that the Father cannot *not* love you.
 - c. There are many people who hate themselves – so many people who are not at home in themselves because they believe they are bad and unlovable.
 - d. And if you believe you are unlovable, you also believe that God is condemning you. If you believe that you are unloved, and God is condemning you, the self-image and the God-image reinforce one another.

Why is accepting the Kingdom, and that one is loved by God unconditionally, so vital?

1. Accepting the Kingdom and that you are loved by God unconditionally will change your attitude to almost *everything* in life. In particular it will change our attitude to status, success, possessions, and power.
2. It will give us the *power to forgive*. It is only when we know that we are loved that we can accept our own and then other's sinfulness.
3. I believe that even though Jesus came to establish the Kingdom, much of our prayer is counter to the Kingdom. It is seeking the very things that we are asked to transcend.

How does meditation lead to the Kingdom?

1. Meditation leads to the Kingdom because it helps us to just be still and know that God is God; God is gift; God is. To know that the gift is there sets us free.
2. One of our meditation group members shared that, before she started to meditate, she used spend half of her salary on makeup, manicure, pedicure, and the like. Recently she had noticed that these things were no longer important to her and that she was no longer buying them. What was happening? I think that through her meditating she was coming to discover the gift of the Kingdom within her. Knowing that she was loved, she could appreciate the gift of her inner beauty, and this was setting her free from the need to wear masks that her earlier self-perceptions had caused in her.

Notes in outline produced by Alex Peck (aepeck77@yahoo.com.au); April 22, 2009.
Source: Fr. Gerry Pierse, “The Prayer That Jesus Taught”, *Meditatio Talks 2006, Series A*
(<http://www.wccm.org/item.asp?recordid=meditatiolisten&pagestyle=default>)