

Kingdom of God

In the first two chapters of Genesis, we are given two stories of creation. Then, in the third chapter, the snake enters and everything changes. Perfect harmony of nature and intimacy with God are disrupted. The gift of free will that God gives to all humans was abused. What God wanted was no long the most important consideration. Instead, what humans wanted became the central consideration. This is all part of the story of creation. But is it so different from now? Think of creation, of the garden and temptations, not as something past but as something that is continuing to go on. Think of the Garden not only as history but also as ongoing now. Think of creation as a place where people did and do abuse their free will and put their interests ahead of God's. But also think of creation as a place where all sorts of wonderful and awesome things happened and are happening.

I suggest this understanding of creation in order for us to better understand the Kingdom of God. Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom of God. He says that it is, among many other things, "at hand", "has come near to you," "has come upon you," and "is in the midst of you." On the other hand, He frequently refers to the Kingdom of God as something to come in the future. In other words, the Kingdom of God is BOTH coming and at hand. This is true in the same mysterious way that creation both was and is now. Jesus tells us that the Kingdom is growing like a tiny mustard grows into a large plant. (Mark 4:26-34) In understanding this, we need to recognize that a kingdom is not necessarily a place; it is also the people over whom the king reigns. Likewise, the Kingdom of God is not necessarily a place. We individually are the Kingdom of God. It is within each of us. How could it be any other way when we are accepted as part of God's family by virtue of our baptism and the Holy Spirit of God is in us? In addition, the Kingdom of God is all of us together. Jesus said "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) and if Jesus is in our midst, how can this not be the Kingdom? It is hard to recognize the Kingdom because we are so close that we see all the imperfections in what we expect to be a perfect place. It is like creation happening around us. We are so close to

it that we do not see the changes. Jesus invites us to see and hear God and His Kingdom in the familiar rounds of sights and sounds of everyday life. Indeed He challenges us to contemplate until the commonplace wakes our minds and hearts to wonder. "Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear" Whoever has eyes to see, let him see.

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