

Seek first the Kingdom of God!

SUNDAY 2 (A) BEFORE LENT

*“Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness
and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

(Matthew 6.33)

Introduction

All of us have favourite Scripture verses that mean a lot to us. This is one of my most preferred and favourite Bible verses and probably among the most important words of Jesus Christ. When I was in Africa, a missionary in Tanzania, these verses became like a guiding vision and light in working for God. I was, and am, convinced that if we truly do God’s work with his heart, God will truly bless us and our work.

Most of the time we get distracted in our lives and we lose track of the really important issues in our lives. So these words of Jesus really challenge us today.

We all are daily busy with all sorts of diverse activity that takes a lot of your time and energy. But, where is God in all this?

So what does Jesus mean by these words?

“Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be yours as well.”

Jesus is very concrete, very realistic when he tells us. When Jesus says in verse 25, *“do not worry about your life”* and *“what you eat or drink or what you wear”*, *Jesus is saying that* there is more to life than food, drink and clothes.

We are living in a diet crazy, fashion conscious society. The mass media and the market are brainstorming and bombarding us with constant and continuous messages that all that matters is what you eat, what you drink, what you wear!

Jesus gives two beautiful examples of “the birds of the air” and “lilies of the field” (verses 26-30). At this time of the year the words of Jesus strike home, don’t they? The earth is about to spring to new life as Spring approaches – birds are again chirping and twittering and flying about; flowers of all hues and colours are about to blossom ...God’s providence and power are everywhere to see ...Jesus is basically telling us: *“Do not worry about your life”*; he says it repeatedly in verse 25, 27, 28, 31.

Someone might say; well, what about the “recession”, how can you not worry about things when the government is on a cutting spree so as to balance the budget? Well, Jesus’ audience 2000 years ago were not having our man-made problems but had problems of subsistence – food, drink, clothes and shelter much more than our situation today, if he could say to them, *“do not worry”*, then he can say so to us as well today! Jesus is really telling us: *“First things first!”* Give God his place and all will be well for you! Try it! You’ll see it is possible!

But what is the Kingdom?

Jesus preached the Kingdom not himself although Jesus is the revealer, champion, initiator and bearer of the Kingdom. The words of “Kingdom of God” appear 162 times in the NT and 92 times in the lips of Jesus himself. The word “Church” is mentioned only 2 times. It is said that Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of God; all we got was the Church! In the OT the word appears only once in the Book of Wisdom. The preaching of the Kingdom of God is absolutely central to his mission. Not only that the Kingdom of God is what he lived and practised symbolically in his eating and drinking together in table fellowships with all sorts of people

without excluding anyone, but actually he had a heart and predilection for the poor, the unwanted, despised and deprived of society. His healing of all types of illnesses, exorcisms and raising people to life are all signs of the presence of the Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated. The Kingdom of God is the sovereignty of God accepted and established in the hearts of men.

The message that comes across through the proclamation and praxis of Jesus about the Kingdom is: *God loves us unconditionally! God forgives always! God is present to us as the compassionate one!*

In the numerous examples in the New Testament, the *Kingdom of God is present* in our midst but its fulfilment is beyond.

Second, the *Kingdom of God is a gift and also a task* – bringing people into contact with God and making the world a community of God : This is our mission as a Church!

Third, the *Kingdom of God is understood as Church* – but the Kingdom exists also outside the Church. That is why “dialogue” with other religions and movements is imperative! “Anywhere people are reconciling and creating community the Kingdom of God is present.” That is why January 24th was so crucial and special for us at St Michael and All Angels. The Kingdom of God happened in our midst that day!

Our task and mission as a Church is to create communities where the Kingdom shines forth and we become parables, signs and a fore-taste of the Kingdom of God. It is an important task to point to the Kingdom through witness and to make people conscious of its transforming power!

Conclusion:

As a Church, in our parish we must provide and practise a “spirituality of the Kingdom.” Our Home Groups are *Kingdom Presences* in the midst of our Parish Community to proclaim and witness to the Kingdom. Above all, every time we care for the people, especially the poor, the lonely, the widowed, the sick, the deprived, the desperate, the rootless people young or old, the unemployed and the forgotten ones of society especially in our Parish Community, the Kingdom is present and comes alive. *Whatever you do to the least of these my brother or sister of mine; you do it to me.” (Matthew 25.40)*

Father Sebastian