

Driftless Reflections with Pastor Dave

Bible Study

The Kingdom of God is...Now - But Not Yet

October 2, 2020 | Luke 4:31-44; Isaiah 61

TODAY'S THEME

The Kingdom of God is now, near, at hand, within you ... but not yet fully ... and it is good news.

The good news is Jesus brings us much more than we can imagine. Jesus came to inaugurate a whole new reality, a reality into which all people are welcomed to live by faith, a reality that will come to fullness and completeness when the King returns. This Kingdom is here, but not yet fully revealed. We enter this Kingdom by faith. We proclaim this Kingdom to the world, not just with our words, but even more powerfully with our actions.

INTRODUCTION: CLOCKS

A clock appears very simple. Two hands moving across the face tell you the time. Inside, however, clocks can be very complex. There are gears and wheels and springs, movement and power and mechanisms.

There are times when something is right in front of your face, like a clock, and you can't really see it. This is like the Kingdom of God. It's right here among us, and we often don't see it. Just like a clock, the Kingdom is complex, mysterious, and intricate, and it requires that every part and piece work together for one common purpose. The purpose of a clock is to tell us what time it is. In the Kingdom, the time is always "now," because the Kingdom is here with us, right now.

PRAYER

Father God, you are right here with us, right now. This time is Kingdom time, as we seek to find you in our midst and join your world in our world. Right now, is the right time to open your scriptures and listen to what you are saying to us. Your news is good news, and it's good news for everyone. Meet with us here as we meet with one another in Jesus' name. Amen.

Content

The synoptic Gospels (the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which describe events from a similar point of view, as contrasted with that of John) follow a common pattern: Jesus is baptized (Luke 3:21 and forward), Jesus is driven into the desert to be tested (Luke 4:1-13), and Jesus begins his public ministry (Luke 4:14 and forward).

Each of the synoptic Gospels introduces Jesus and his public ministry in slightly different ways, each one fleshing out the meaning of the good news that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

In the Luke's Gospel, this movement begins with Jesus teaching in the synagogue, quoting Isaiah (Luke 4:16-30). Luke communicates several important aspects of Jesus' Kingdom work as the

Messiah in this section:

- The good news he proclaims is for the poor, captive, blind and oppressed, those normally thought to be abandoned by God.
- The good news is for the Gentiles, not just the Jews (the point of 4:25-27).
- The good news will be rejected by some, especially those with power and status to protect.

Look at Luke 4 and notice the quotation from Isaiah. Jesus is saying that he is the direct fulfillment of this prophecy.

REFLECTION

How is Jesus good news for the poor, captive, blind and oppressed? Do you think Jesus is speaking about those who are metaphorically in this condition, or those who are actually poor, captive, blind, and oppressed?

Luke 4:31-44 NLT Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there in the synagogue every Sabbath day. 32 There, too, the people were amazed at His teaching, for He spoke with authority. 33 Once when He was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—began shouting at Jesus, 34 "Go away! Why are You interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" 35 Jesus cut him short. "Be quiet! Come out of the man," He ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further. 36 Amazed, the people exclaimed, "What authority and power this man's words possess! Even evil spirits obey Him, and they flee at His command!" 37 The news about Jesus spread through every village in the entire region. 38 After leaving the synagogue that day, Jesus went to Simon's home, where He found Simon's mother-in-law very sick with a high fever. "Please heal her," everyone begged. 39 Standing at her bedside, He rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and prepared a meal for them. 40 As the sun went down that evening, people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of His hand healed every one. 41 Many were possessed by demons; and the demons came out at His command, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But because they knew He was the Messiah, He rebuked them and refused to let them speak. 42 Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for Him, and when they finally found Him, they begged Him not to leave them. 43 But He replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent." 44 So He continued to travel around, preaching in synagogues throughout Judea.

Jesus leaves his hometown of Nazareth because a prophet is without respect in his hometown. He moves 20 miles north to Capernaum, a fishing village on the Galilee, which becomes his missional home base. As is his custom, he begins teaching in the synagogue, because his mission is first to Israel. The people are astounded at his teaching because he teaches as one who has authority; that is, first-hand knowledge of God. Jesus isn't just spouting theology he learned in school.

REFLECTION

Where does Jesus' authority come from? Does anyone in your life speak with this kind of authority?

In the synagogue Jesus encounters a man possessed by an unclean spirit (“a phrase used to differentiate his devilish origin from other psychic influences recognized in the Hellenistic world.” – from *Jesus and the New Age* by Fred Danker). Notice that the demon uses the pronoun “us” when speaking to Jesus. He is so identified with the man he possesses that he assumes Jesus cannot destroy one without destroying the other. Luke, through the voice of the demon, is subtly telling us what Jesus’ ultimate objective is: the destruction of Satan. Jesus is quite able to cast out the demon without destroying the man who is possessed, and does so with words, connecting him to the One who created all things by speaking them into being.

REFLECTION

How does this incident point to the eventual destruction of Satan?

Unlike those in his hometown who dismiss Jesus based on his lowly upbringing, the people of Capernaum focus on Jesus’ authority and power. Like God’s creative word, Jesus’ word does something.

While the demon knows who Jesus is, the crowds are still uncertain. Among other things, this incident shows the power of the new King to defeat the enemies of darkness and to set humanity free.

REFLECTION

How does the demon know who Jesus is? Do you think demons are still active today? In what way? How do we know?

Beginning in verse 38, the scene changes to Simon Peter’s home where his mother-in-law lies sick with a fever. This is our introduction to Simon in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus casts out the fever just as he casts out the demon, by rebuking it. Once again, there is a focus on the power of Jesus’ words. Immediately Simon’s mother-in-law rises up, a phrase that carries subtle implications of resurrection, and she serves Jesus. Word about Jesus spreads, and Jesus heals many more from sickness and demonic possession. The demons all recognize Jesus as the Messiah, but Jesus forbids them to speak because his full self-revelation will come on the cross.

REFLECTION

Do you think sickness and demons are the same thing, or very different? Why?

These incidents illustrate the truth of Luke 4:16-30. Jesus is indeed the embodiment of Isaiah’s words. He is the promised Messiah. Now that the King has come to inaugurate his Kingdom, the enemies of the Kingdom are beginning to fall: Satan, sickness and death.

Verses 42-44 are a summary statement of this chapter. All that Jesus has done in this section is a living proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom has come; it is here and now. And we recognize its arrival because the enemies of the Kingdom are beginning to fall at the hand of the King.

REFLECTION

What enemies of the Kingdom are falling today?

Is this work that you want to do? Like to do? Does it scare you?

GOING DEEPER: THE MAIN EVENT

Many Christians mistakenly assume that the main event of our faith life happens after we die, that that's when the gospel really matters. In the meantime, we're just waiting this life out. But the good news according to Jesus is that the main event has already begun. The Kingdom of God is here, now, at hand.

With Jesus' arrival, the gracious, powerful reign of God has entered this world. God's decisive battle against the enemies of humanity (sin, death and the devil) was waged and won on the cross. The empty tomb proclaims the victory. In the ancient world, Jesus' ascension was seen as his victory march. Despite decisive battles in which the war was won, there are continuing mop-up operations until that victory is final, complete, universal. We are living in such times. By faith, we are invited to live into this new

Kingdom reality, celebrating both God's victory and ours. We also await that day when Jesus returns and the victory is final, complete, universal. In that day: every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord; all remnants of the old reign will be eliminated (no more sickness, tears, darkness or death); and a new or renewed heaven and earth will join together like a bride and groom.

REFLECTION

Are you looking forward to this day, the marriage of heaven and earth? What does it mean that "every" tongue will confess Jesus as Lord? Everyone?

Application

LIVING INTO THE KINGDOM REALITY

It takes faith to believe that we can live into a Kingdom so radically different than the kingdom of this world, in the midst of this world.

REFLECTION

How is the realm of the Kingdom radically different than the kingdom of this world?

Select one Kingdom living reality from the following list to work on this week.

- It takes faith to believe that forgiveness really is better than bitterness. How can you live into deeper forgiveness this week?
- It takes faith to believe that love really is better than hate. How can you show love in greater ways this week?
- It takes faith to believe that generosity really is better than accumulation. How can you be more generous this week?
- It takes faith to believe that serving really is better than being served. How will you serve someone this week?
- It takes faith to believe that compassion really is better than indifference. How can you show greater compassion this week?

PRAY

Father God, by faith we want to live differently. Help us to proclaim the good news of your Kingdom to the world, not just with our words, but even more powerfully with our actions. Teach us how to live

in greater love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, generosity, and compassion. We want to be those who hear your good news, believe your good news, and then live your good news by faith.

Amen.