

“The Kingdom of God is Within You”  
Rev. Brian R. Louis, Faith Presbyterian Church  
July 30, 2023

Luke 17:20-21 -- Once Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed, <sup>21</sup> nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among<sup>[b]</sup> you.”

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word.

Thank you, University of Chicago Divinity School, for teaching me how to read and interpret scripture. Thank you for teaching me Greek. Thank you for teaching me to take great care in reading scripture. Thank you for encouraging me to look at the footnotes. Thank you for giving me the ability to know that the interpretation of one or two words can make all the difference in the message and interpretation of a text. And that is the case today with our New Testament lesson.

Listen again to the last part of verse 21 from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: “For, in fact, the kingdom of God is **among**<sup>[b]</sup> you.” Now in my Bible, there is a notation after “among.” The notation below says the word could also be “within.” The Greek word for “among,” *entos*, also means “within” and “in the midst of.”

So, if we use within, the way it is done in the King James Version, the New International Version, and the Good News Bible, that changes the way we look at the text, doesn't it?

The kingdom of God is within you. What did the author of Luke mean here? Was it among, or within? Either interpretation is valid. In the midst is also valid and is used in some bible translations of the Greek. In scripture sometimes, there is not a "one size fits all" way to interpret. This is one of the joys of interpreting scripture, and learning Greek, which all Presbyterian ministers must do.

I wear many hats as pastor. One of those hats I believe is to help encourage people to develop their spiritual lives in part through prayer, meditation and taking quiet time.

Another part of developing our spiritual lives is reading and interpreting scripture. There is no one size fits all, as I hope I've shown today. Scripture can be a never-ending source of fascination and challenge. It can open new worlds for us.

So, what could that phrase mean for us, the Kingdom of God within you. How can we interpret this?

The New International Version Study Bible we have in the library says the kingdom of God is within you.

The commentary in it says that phrase likely indicates “that the kingdom is spiritual and internal (Mt. 23:26) rather than physical and external (cf Jn 18:36).”<sup>1</sup> It also says the meaning is likely that the “kingdom is spiritual and so not visible.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, I’m going to need all of you to work with me today. We’re going to do a little experiment and for this I need you to have an open mind and to go with me on a little journey within yourself. Your imagination is going to get a little workout. I want you to close your eyes and relax for a few seconds. And I want you to imagine what the Kingdom of God is like. What would God’s kingdom be like do you think? Drift off and imagine what the kingdom of God is like for you. Is it beautiful? Is it amazing? Is it wonderful? What is that like? Take a few minutes to think about that.

(pause) OK, now open your eyes. Keep that imagery in your mind and remember it. How do you feel? In your body, when you thought of what your kingdom of God was, what did you feel like? Did you feel calmer. A little happier? Hopeful? Perhaps you didn’t feel anything, and that’s OK too. Keep trying to envision the Kingdom to you with an open mind, I suspect you will feel something eventually.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Barker, general editor, *The NIV Study Bible*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: ZonervanPublishingHouse, 1995), 1571.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Now would anyone like to be brave and share what they thought the Kingdom of God looked like for them?

Now, when I did this on Wednesday, it was a beautiful exercise. The kingdom I imagined – the kingdom of God within me – was a wonderful thing. The Kingdom I see within me is one where there is no war, no discrimination, no hate, all people are kind and loving to each other, the planet is in good shape and doesn't suffer from awful pollution or global warming. There's no road rage. There aren't mass shootings. There is no murder. There is economic opportunity for everyone. The love of God flourishes. I felt calmer after I imagined this. I felt inspired. I felt like a door opened for me inside myself. I felt as if I found a new tool to search internally for peace and contentment. I can think of the Kingdom of God anytime and find peace. I can turn to the Kingdom of God within during the day and feel the warmth of the love of God. I can be an example of a citizen of the kingdom of God for everyone I encounter.

I love the interpretation of using the Kingdom of God is within. Inside me, the Kingdom of God is perfect peace.

Now the concept of the Kingdom of God here on Earth and bringing the Kingdom of God here is something to strive for too, and it has existed in Christianity since the beginning. I can work to realize the Kingdom of God out here in the world, helping the poor, visiting the lonely, donating money to the church for our mission here. This is in part what our mission as Christians means.

And thankfully I can always turn to the Kingdom of God within, no matter where I am, or what I am doing.

I encourage you to meditate on the Kingdom of God within you and what you think the Kingdom of God could be. We can get in touch with the Kingdom of God within us, and we can bring it to the world in the people we meet and in how we feel inside.

“For, in fact, the kingdom of God is within<sup>[b]</sup> you.” Revel and glory in the kingdom of God within you. Feel the Lord’s presence within you and all the glories the Lord has done. Seek the kingdom within when times are difficult, and rest in the loving presence of Christ’s kingdom within you. Amen.