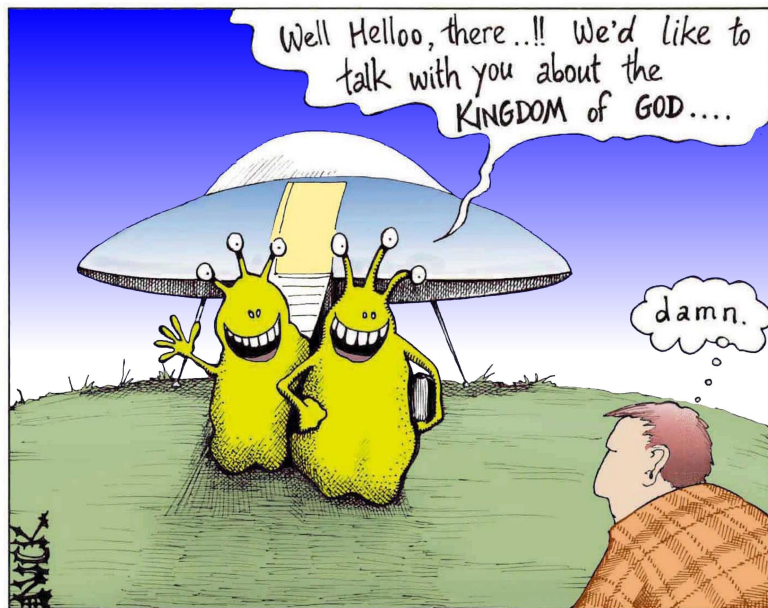


It is not a place, of course, but a condition. *Kingship* might be a better word. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," Jesus prayed. The two are in apposition.

Insofar as here and there, and now and then, God's kingly will is being done in various odd ways among us even at this moment, the kingdom has come already. Insofar as all the odd ways we do his will at this moment are at best half-baked and halfhearted, the kingdom is still a long way off—a hell of a long way off, to be more precise and theological.

As a poet, Jesus is maybe at his best in describing the feeling you get when you glimpse the Thing Itself—the kingship of the king official at last and all the world his coronation. It's like finding a million dollars in a field, he says, or a jewel worth a king's ransom. It's like finding something you hated to lose and thought you'd never find again—an old keep-sake, a stray sheep, a missing child. When the kingdom really comes, it's as if the thing you lost and thought you'd never find again is you.

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*



FIRST CONTACT

compiled by RWH for Northminster Macon — week of 2024-02-04

Monday Morning



ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὃς ἐάν μὴ δέξηται τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ὡς παιδίον, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν.

When the crowd gathered again, the people brought their children to see Jesus, hoping that He might grant them His blessing through His touch. His disciples turned them all away; but when Jesus saw this, He was incensed.

Jesus: Let the children come to Me, and don't ever stand in their way, for this is what the kingdom of God is all about. **Truly anyone who doesn't accept the kingdom of God as a little child does can never enter it.** Jesus gathered the children in His arms, and He laid His hands on them to bless them.

Mark 10:13-16, *The Voice* translation

Ten million roots are pumping in the streets: do you hear them? Ten million buds are forming in the axils of the leaves: do you hear the sound of the saw or the hammer? All next summer is at work in the world, but is unseen by us. And so "the kingdom of God comes not with observation."

Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887)
American congregational preacher

Jesus teaches that people are to receive the kingdom much as children receive things. The child is not being idealized (as is often thought in the Western world), for the child was not held in high regard in late antiquity. Indeed, parents had the power of life and death over the very young: "If you bear a child: if it is a boy, keep it; if it is a girl, throw it out"; though this was a pagan practice, not a Jewish one). Rather, Jesus' point is that one should accept the kingdom and be obedient to its summons in the same way children will without question obey adults and do what they are told. δέξασθαι τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, "to receive the kingdom of God," is to submit to the authority of God's rule. Adults, assumed to possess power and authority of their own, will not be able to enter the kingdom, for their own authority will clash with that of God's. For this reason the person who wishes to receive the kingdom must receive it "as a child does," that is, without presumptions of self-importance and self-empowerment.

Word Biblical Commentary

Verse 15 is introduced by "truly, I say to you," which underscores its special importance. It appears in a different context in Matthew 18:3, so it could stand alone. Here in Mark, it is related to the preceding saying in a way that constitutes a progression from Jesus' attitude toward children to the attitude of the children themselves and finally to the attitude of disciples toward the Kingdom of God. The disciples hinder children who are being brought to Jesus for a blessing; Jesus says that rather than hinder the children, disciples need to learn from them how to be blessed. The dependence of children, who cannot support themselves but expect and receive their support from parents, becomes a metaphor for entering the Kingdom of God. The essential point in this text is not humility as in Matt. 18:3-4, nor innocence as in the Shepherd of Hermas 27:1 and 106:1-3. The key phrase here is "receive . . . like a child." This is the climax of the unit's figurative meaning.

Interpretation Bible Commentary

The more seriously we take the future promise of God's kingdom, the more unbearable will be the contradictions of that promise which we meet in the present.

Jürgen Moltmann

Children are innocent and love justice,
while most adults are wicked and prefer mercy.

G. K. Chesterton

Lord, may your kingdom come into my heart to sanctify me, nourish me, and purify me. How insignificant is the passing moment to the eye without faith! But how important each moment is to the eye enlightened by faith! How can we deem insignificant anything which has been caused by you? Every moment and every event is guided by you, and so contains your infinite greatness. So, Lord, I glorify you in everything that happens to me. In whatever manner you make me live and die, I am content. Events please me for their own sake, regardless of their consequences, because your action lies behind them. Everything is heaven to me, because all my moments manifest your love.

Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751)
French Jesuit priest and writer

One laugh of a child will make the holiest day more sacred still.

Robert Green Ingersoll

Make us receptive and open and may we accept your kingdom like children taking bread from the hands of their father. Let us live in your peace, at home with you, all the days of our lives.

Huub Oosterhuis (1961-2023)
Dutch theologian and poet

Jesus uses the example of a child to illustrate this point. We must receive the kingdom "like a child" (Mark 10:15). Here, the Greek word translated as "child" refers to the youngest and most helpless of children. Christ is calling us to utter dependence on Him as the way into His kingdom. We take great joy in our young children, and the arrival of a baby is one of the happiest times in our lives. But the youngest children cannot do anything for themselves. They cannot make any tangible contribution to the functioning of the household. In fact, they are desperately needy. That is how we are in relation to our Father in heaven. We rely completely on His mercy for our salvation and, indeed, for our every need. Only by admitting this can we be part of the kingdom of God.

Tabletalk magazine

The Kingdom lies before you—walk towards it with hope and confidence. The Kingdom lies at hand—grasp it and live its values today. The Kingdom lies within you—let it shine through your love for others. Amen.

United Reformed Church