

Pentecost 7 - July 18, 2009, Archdeacon D. Ian Grant,  
St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario

'A hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labours of others living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the measure as I have received and am still receiving.'

Probably the greatest scientist in history, Albert Einstein, wrote these words.

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This extraordinarily gifted and remarkably humble human being with all his internationally acknowledged accomplishments and discoveries, nonetheless acknowledged that he was dependent on his forbears and that from those to whom much had been given, much would be expected.

A hundred times a day I remind myself.....

With the great 17<sup>th</sup> century poet and sometime Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, England, John Donne, Einstein understood that, 'No man is an island unto himself, any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind.'

And we, you and I, likewise, are irrevocably involved in humankind.

In this fast-paced world we are sometimes tempted to think that we can be insulated from others, and live unto ourselves, or on the contrary, be all things to all people. So either self-centredness or blind ambition compels us to think that no one else can do what we do. It is humbling to reflect on those words of Einstein, and seek to govern our own lives accordingly, to acknowledge what we owe to those who have gone before us, and those whose lives are integrated with ours, who continue to make it possible for us to live a full and balanced life, and to emphasize our responsibility to be an active part of the holy network whereby we exercise our baptismal call to be citizens of the Kingdom of God.

A hundred times a day I remind myself.....

So, what are we to make of all this ? What is this kingdom of God ? Where is it ?

Who is it ? One of the mistakes we make, I think, is that we have a tendency to imply that the Church is the Kingdom of God and that the Anglican Church or the Roman Catholic Church or the Baptist Church holds exclusive rights to the Kingdom. Having said that, the clergy are not the Kingdom of God either, although we sometimes like to think we are or behave as though we were. Some groups in the Church sometimes behave as though they were the Kingdom of God. There are many petty, false, pretend kingdoms in the Church. You know who they are !!!!!

The Kingdom of God, then, cannot be located geographically, nor is it an institution.

So what does it mean to pray as Jesus taught us, Your Kingdom come....on earth as it is in heaven. How will we know if or when the Kingdom of God has come on earth as it is in heaven ?

When Jesus began his Galilean ministry, he proclaimed, rather mysteriously, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near." That petition in the Lord's Prayer was preceded by the petition, "Your will be done." So it would appear that the signs of the Kingdom of God are present when God's will is done, but we cannot assume that we and we alone, have the monopoly on God's will.

In the first reading this morning we learn that King David was ambitious to build a magnificent house of Cedar for God, a suitable place for the Ark of the Covenant. He discussed these ambitions with the prophet Nathan, who at first thought it was a terrific idea and encouraged David to proceed. Neither had taken into account God's plan which Nathan was told about that very night. It was God's will that not David but his son Solomon would build a house for God's name. Like Moses, who likewise was given the vision of God's plan but would not live to lead the people into the promised land, so David was told of the plan, but was told clearly that he was not to be permitted to participate in its fulfilment. It was not God's will.

Now, it wasn't that God didn't like David. Far from it. The psalm this morning is almost a love poem about God's feelings for David. I will not take my love from him. Nor let my faithfulness prove false. I will keep my love for him for ever. It was just not in God's plan for David to be the one to build God's house. It was not God's will.

In the second reading this morning - from Paul's letter to the Ephesians - Paul gives voice to his vision of Jew and Gentile made one in Christ. It is one of Paul's

most eloquent outpourings from the heart. He would do everything in his power to make that vision a reality, but it would elude him, as it remains elusive to us who pray and work earnestly for the unity of the church, to say nothing of the unity of the human family in the face of continuous sectarian prejudice, injustice and violence.

In this morning's Gospel, we witness our Lord's compassion for the great mass of desperate humanity, sick and rudderless, without vision, without a shepherd to guide them in the ways of God, so in need of the assurance of the good news of God's love for them, and God's capacity, through the citizens of the Kingdom, to bring healing and wholeness, justice and peace, feed the hungry, heal the sick, bring sight to the blind, comfort for those who mourn, and let the oppressed go free.

Jesus knew that like King David and St. Paul, he himself would not see the realization of the Kingdom of God, and so he called disciples, citizens of the Kingdom, who would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue his work of ministry and mission in the world in every age.

Our call, then, is to remain faithful to the vision of a world in which justice, unity and peace prevail, and to work diligently and with humility to make it happen even in small and seemingly insignificant ways, as we search out and celebrate even the smallest sign of the fulfilment of God's loving will and purpose for the human race and for the entire creation. This certainly was at the heart of Jesus' ministry.

Where these works of ministry and mission are carried out faithfully, where disciples genuinely seek the will of God in their lives and live it, there will be recognized the signs of the Kingdom of God. And we shall know that the Kingdom of God has come near.

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Thanks be to God !