

3C 2019 SML
LK 1:1-4; 4:14-21

“This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is here,” says Our Blessed Lord.

That the kingdom of God is “here:” now, already, is driven home by Luke repeatedly using the word “today.”

Today a Savior is born to you. (2:11)

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross **today** and follow me. (9:23)

In this evening’s/morning’s gospel, **Today** this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing. (4:21)

Today salvation has come to this house. (19:9)

"Amen amen, I say to you, **today** you will be with me in paradise. (23:43)

Today, today, today, today, today. The Kingdom of God is here, today. And while Our Blessed Lord says the Kingdom of God is here, our response has been “not yet.”

There is no scene in the Gospel that more clearly illustrates this tension between “already” and “not yet” than Jesus’ preaching in the synagogue, as recorded in this evening’s/morning’s gospel, when He said, “**Today** this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Next week's Gospel will pick up where this week's leaves off. At first, Jesus meets happy agreement. "All spoke highly of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth."

But then the wind shifts. Suddenly the inhabitants of Nazareth take offense at Jesus, so much so that by the end of the story, they want to toss him off a cliff. In April, our group from St. Mary of the Lakes visited the spot, and from where we stood, you couldn't see the bottom. What was so offensive?

Everyone is praying for God's kingdom to come. But in the hour when it actually happens, it is evident that people had not imagined it quite this way. That nasty today! Not like this! Not here in Nazareth and not here in Medford! And not now!

Jesus' hearers prefer to push Him off a cliff and push everything else off into the future. The reign of God announced by Jesus is not accepted. The "today" offered by God is denied. And that alone is why "already" becomes "not yet."

It was not only in Nazareth that the "today" of the Gospel was not accepted. Later also, in the course of the church's history, it has again and again been denied or rendered toothless. It can't be today, because that would mean that our lives would have to change "today!" Therefore God's salvation

is better delayed into the future. There it can lie, neat and clean, and snugly packed, at rest, with no consequences, at least for now.

Hence the reason why this type of suppression intensifies the hope for another world, when in fact, accepting Jesus' today should make all the difference in the world today, and it should have made all the difference in the world for the last 2000 years. The only reason why it hasn't is because since Jesus preached in Nazareth His "today," God's people haven't accepted it. Jesus knows with ultimate certainty that the promised, longed-for, prayed-for future is here, that the reign of God is here. That is the only way to understand Jesus' beatitude addressed to His disciples "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it." (LK 10:23-24)

People shake their heads and say, "Nothing has changed. The world goes on just as it has." Jesus says "No." The reign of God does not come with trumpet sound and lightning blast. The reign of God comes into the world like a grain of wheat that grows. So ultimately, the unconditional "today" Jesus proclaimed is dependent upon our agreeing with "today." Yes,

today. Yes, today. And that means I need to get my act together today.

That means using creative thinking in a positive way. Do you recall a few months ago the Go Fund Me scam and homeless man? Can you imagine if that kind of creativity was used in a good way? The Kingdom of God would be in the here and now. Can you imagine the possibilities of saying no to good things so as to say yes to the right thing? The Kingdom of God would be in the here and now. Can you imagine if we had the “bring it on Lord” attitude? Lord, give me more, give me more:

Blessings

Grace

More of the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Not for my benefit, Lord, but for Yours. Give me more Lord, so I can give you more. The Kingdom of God would be in the here and now.

There is another parable later in Luke that picks up this “today.” It’s the parable of the excuses. The banquet is prepared, all was ready, and the guests were invited. But the response was one excuse after another:

✓ I bought a farm

- ✓ I bought five yoke of oxen
- ✓ I just got married
- ✓ Yada yada yada

The parable is not about salvation someday, in the next life, joy beyond this world. It is about God's feast with his people, which is to happen now, in the hour of Jesus' appearing today.

Perhaps the excuses are honorable. "I would love to, but I cannot come." Our Blessed Lord would say, "It's not an either or. It's a both and." You bought a farm. Fine. Well, the reign of God is here and you're welcome. You bought some oxen. Fine. The reign of God is here and you're welcome. You got married. Fine.

It's seems as if people prefer not to let God get too close. Not now. Not yet. Not today. They would rather dance at their own wedding than at the one God is inviting them to, today.