

The kingdom of God is in your midst

The kingdom of God is in your midst (Luke 17:20-37)

We have been studying the gospel of Luke. Today, we will be studying from the latter half of chapter 17. The theme is “the kingdom of God is in your midst”.

Let's look at the first half of this chapter quickly.

Jesus told his disciples that it was impossible that no offenses or stumbling blocks should come. He also told them to relate to their brother who sinned so that he can recover. He said to them, “Even if a person sins against you seven times in a day, if he comes back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' forgive him.”

Hearing of that, the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

Jesus talked about faith as small as a mustard seed, and gave a parable of a servant, and said "when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'

Following of that, we have a story of ten men who had leprosy. Jesus said "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he realized he was healed, came back all the way to see Jesus. And he threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. If we ask him why he did so, he might say, "Well, I just did what I ought to do as I encountered Almighty God."

Faith is not a matter of "much or little", nor a matter of "big or small". It is a matter of "having it or not", and a matter of "using it or not". The important thing for faith is what God is like in whom we have faith.

Then, we arrive at today's part. The kingdom of God is in our midst. Then, if so, how should we live our lives?

1. When will the kingdom of God come?

20-21

²⁰ Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, ²¹ nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

The Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the kingdom of God come?" What was their intention when they asked Jesus this question? They didn't ask this to know exactly in which year and in which month the kingdom of God would start. Rather, they were saying the kingdom of God had not come yet, and that there had not been even a slightest sign of its beginning. In other words, they were denying Jesus' work as Messiah.

People in those days, had an image of Messiah who is a military powerful king who can recover the kingdom of Israel. The numbers of their soldiers would increase and their armament will be strengthened. And starting from victories in small battles, they would gradually extend their power.

If the kingdom of God were to be realized in that way, just as the Pharisees claim, there weren't even a slightest sign of its coming.

But Jesus said, "The kingdom of God does not come in the way people can recognize it with their physical eyes."

The kingdom of God does not come in the way people expect it to come. It is not that this region and that region will become the kingdom of God militarily nor politically. But he said, "the kingdom of God is within you. (NIV) the kingdom of God is in your midst. (NASB) the Kingdom of God is among you" (NRSV)

Jesus also said this. "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news." (Mark 1:15) The kingdom of God is among those who repent and believe the good news.

2. The day the Son of Man is revealed

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²² Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it.

Here the coming of the Kingdom of God is related with the day the Son of Man is revealed. Jesus calls himself the Son of Man. (Matt 8:20) This word, the Son of Man appears in Daniel 7:13-14.

Daniel 7:13-14

¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,

coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

We can see that the Son of Man is the king of kings. In Revelation 1:5, God reveals that Jesus Christ is "the ruler of the kings of the earth".

The words, the kingdom of God and the days of the Son of Man don't seem related. But these two (concepts) are inseparably connected. They both show just one thing.

23-25

²³ Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them.

²⁴ For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. ²⁵ But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

There are some deceptions about the days of the Son of Man's appearing.

The first one is, some people stop doing everything and just wait for the Lord's coming, because the day of the Lord is coming near. (Heb 10:25)

The second one is, some people think the day of the Lord has already come. (Matt 24:5-6, 2 Thess 2:2)

The third one is, some people think the day of the Lord will never come. (2 Pet 3:4)

It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come. We cannot prevent deceivers from appearing. There will be deception about the coming of the kingdom of God. There will be deception about Christ's Second Coming. False Christ may appear. False teachers may appear. We cannot prevent these things from happening.

Then what can we do? We can open the Bible by ourselves, and learn to exercise sound judgment over things happening in the world based on the Truth. Then, we won't be deceived by the voices of deceivers, nor swayed by the current of the times, nor will we believe everything blindly just because many people say so, or just because it is a popular and trendy teaching.

We need to distinguish God's voice from voices of others. How do we know that it was God who spoke? Imagine this scene. For example, Yumi receives a phone call, and she hears someone say, "Hello". Then, "Hideki san" she can immediately tell it is me, without me telling her my name. Why does she know it is me? Because she is used to my voice. She knows my voice, so she knows it is me.

It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come. We cannot prevent deceivers from appearing. So, we need to become familiar with God's voice, spending time with Him daily. By doing this, we can protect ourselves from being deceived by deceiving voices.

26-33

²⁶ "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. ²⁹ But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. ³² Remember Lot's wife! ³³ Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

In the days of Noah, what did people do? People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage. They were doing what people normally do. And they were destroyed.

In the days of Lot, what did people do? People were eating, drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. They were doing what people usually do. And they were also destroyed.

The Bible says, "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

People usually eat, drink, marry, are given in marriage, buy and sell, plant and build. While they are just doing what people normally do, the Son of Man will come. No one knows about that day or hour. (Matt 24:36)

People in the days of Noah, and Lot, were destroyed. What can we learn

from here? What is Luke chapter 17 teaching us?

I think the point is this; whether we do what we normally do in our daily life with the perspective of the kingdom of God or not.

I don't think they were destroyed because eating, drinking, marrying, being given in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building are bad things to do. But what God sees is the inside of people' lives. God looks at the heart.

"We have only done our duty," the servant answered. The phrase may convey two different meanings. One meaning can be, "I have just done what I am supposed to do. Eating, drinking, marrying, being given in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building, that is what human beings normally do. So what's wrong?" Another meaning can be, "I haven't done anything special. I have only done what is natural for me to do as a person who seeks to build the kingdom of God."

What is it like to live with the perspective of the kingdom of God? We are people of God's kingdom. No matter what we do, we will seek His kingdom and his righteousness. (Matt 6:33) Whatever we do, we will do it to realize the kingdom of God. We are placed at each of our post and position as the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. It is the role we have, or rather, who we are in our family, work place and society, and not just limited in our ministry or project.

3. A servant who will be welcomed to the kingdom of God

34-37

³⁴ I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵ Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." ³⁷ "Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

Here they also ask "Where?" But just like the kingdom of God is not a matter of place, so it is with 'God's judgment' and 'being welcomed into the kingdom of God'. It is not a geographical matter.

We cannot say God's judgment will be done "here or there", or "in such and such place". It is not like that, but wherever there is a person, God will judge the person. No matter where the person is, no matter what he or she may be doing, when the Son of Man comes, one will be left, and another will be

welcomed in to the kingdom of God. This judgment will be followed by the splendor of the Kingdom for which the followers of Christ watch and pray and labor and wait.

According to the dictionary, the word "taken" in v.34 and 35 means "to accept or acknowledge one to be such as he professes to be", "to receive with the mind". In the original (Greek) Bible, this word is also used in John 14:3, and it is translated as "receive".¹

John 14:3

If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and *receive* you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (NASB)

For a person who has lived with the perspective of God's kingdom, the day the Son of Man is the day of joy to be welcomed into the kingdom of God. It is like the joy of bride and bridegroom who have been waiting for their Wedding day, full of hope and expectation.

For Christians, for those who love and believe in Jesus, the life on this earth is the days of preparation for their wedding with Jesus.

We will, of course, eat, drink, work, clean the house, and do the daily chores as people normally do. But now we have encountered with Jesus, know his love, and started to love him with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength. He will come back to receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also forever.

Ten men who had leprosy met Jesus. All of the ten experienced Jesus' goodness. However, nine out of ten, though they were healed of leprosy, still didn't have any relationship with Jesus. But one of them came back to Jesus. He praised and thanked Jesus. From that time on, he started to trust in Jesus and began living in the relationship with him.

What about us? Let me ask some simple but important questions.

Would you like to be welcomed into the kingdom of God? Actually he wants to welcome you to heaven. He is the way, the truth and the life. He is waiting for you to come back to him just like the one who had leprosy did.

You heard about the gospel of the cross and believed, and saved and

¹ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/paralambano.html>

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received healing. Then, after that, what is your relationship with Jesus like?

On Sunday morning, we gather together like this, and worship corporately. We experience God's glory and return to the place of our daily life. We eat, drink, work at work place, at home, study at school and take rest, and have leisure time. Where do you place Jesus in those times?

It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come. We cannot prevent deceivers from appearing. Let's move forward, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith until we will see him face to face. (Heb 12:2)