

Poured Out
Luke 17:20-21

Today is our final Sunday before Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday – all bittersweet with remembrance of Jesus’ final earthly trials – will lead (as always) into Easter celebration.

It’s almost here.

I remember, as a child, asking of *any* special day:

“How much longer? When will it come?”

And a particular babysitter would give her standard answer: “It’s just around the corner!”

So, with a child’s literal mind, I’d want to go for a walk right then... to get around the corner and see: there it is!

Jesus’ initial response to the Pharisees’ question, “When is the Kingdom of God coming?” reminded me of that non-committal phrase, “it’s just around the corner.”

He says, “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say,

‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’”

There’s no surprise waiting in a walk around the bend.

“For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.”

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The Kingdom of God is now and always has been a cloudy concept, not easy to grasp in its fullness.

Jesus used parables to try to explain it;

and Christians have found different metaphors to enable some understanding.

Last week I described it as walking through the Prodigal Father’s door held wide open to all who choose to enter.

I also use the word *kin-dom*, and the *Shalom* of God to evoke the fullness of peace and justice and the good things of life available to all creation when God’s love prevails on earth.

All of these images help us *begin* to understand what Jesus intends when he talks about the Kingdom of God:

that love rules our lives and our actions;

that shalom fills our spirits and pours out into the world.

“Thy kingdom come; *thy will be done on earth* as in heaven.”

But *when* will it come, ask the skeptics; and how will we recognize it?

“The kingdom of God is among you.” It’s not just around the corner or in some unknown future, but here and now and in your face! God’s Shalom is *among* you.

And here is a moment when digging into the text’s original language is helpful comprehending the Kingdom in yet another way. The word “among” in this sentence has been interpreted in different ways depending on which scholar is translating.

The Greek *entos* occurs only 1 other time in the New Testament:

in Matthew chapter 23, “where it designates the inside of a cup”:

*within.*

So the kingdom of God is also *within* you! –

as a chalice holding something within its bowl –

something precious with which it can be filled up –

filled with God's Shalom  
and poured out into the world –  
your cup overflows.

This chalice image stuck with me as I contemplated Jesus' words about God's Kin-dom.

That it is *entos* – within *and* among us:  
both filling up our chalice  
and being poured out *from us* and *between us*.

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I've always been intrigued by the legend of the Holy Grail,
that mythical chalice that Jesus drank from and shared at the Last Supper.
Debate about the Grail has spanned millenia of historical concern – was it silver? gold? simple wood or clay?
did it have 2 handles, one on each side? or none?

The pull of this cup's legend has evoked cultural reference for centuries,
from the tales of King Arthur's knights in their quest for the grail
to the 1970s movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*
to *The Da Vinci Code* novel several years ago.

This chalice – the Grail – was so significant to Christians
because of what it symbolized,
what it held within it:
Jesus' lifeblood.

The words he is said to have spoken over the cup remain with us in traditional Communion liturgy.
According to Luke, Jesus says:
“this cup that is poured out for you
is the new covenant in my blood.”ⁱⁱⁱ

But it is *not* just the blood poured out from his death on the cross, as much of Christianity has taught.
Jesus assured his followers that the Kingdom of God was within and among them
in the moment,
in the living,
breathing,
heart-pumping-blood
Jesus;
and in them as well.

That chalice –
poured out for the disciples
and the oppressed people of Israel
and the Gentiles
and yes, even the Roman oppressors –
held within it the Kingdom of God:
taught among them
and prayed with them
and acted out in peace and justice all around them:
his love, *alive*.

Jesus' enacting of God's Shalom
lived out daily among them
is what led to *earthly* kingdoms executing him on the cross.

It was yet another way of sharing the cup:
giving his all – his life – for God's paths to be revealed.

And Christ continues to call us
to pour out God's Kin-dom
from within our own lives.

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So what does God's Shalom look like

if we cannot say, "Look, here it is! or There it is!"?

Do we think of it as a change to a particular form of government?

Can God's Kin-dom come through a reform of economy?

Can we simply replace these earthly systems with another system  
and call it the Kingdom of God?

*Or... if the Kin-dom is  
already among us...*

**[move to Communion table with chalices on it]**

if you are the cup  
**[motion to chalices],**  
capable of being filled with God's Kingdom,  
how is it poured out from *within* you,  
revealed *among* us,  
in the world?

**[lift a chalice]**

This chalice is our musicians.

This morning we worshiped through the bell choir's music;  
and other Sundays we sit in prayer with the Chancel Choir's ministry;  
with Carrie and Callan and David's servanthood.

Each one of them puts love and dedication into their practice.

They offer an extravagant musical gift... and then it's gone.

Poured out in one moment of grace.

**The Kingdom of God is *within* them –  
poured out to be *among* us  
in worship.**

**[lift 2 chalices]**

These are Kitchen Angels,

some folks who prepare lunch once a month for our senior fellowship group, the First Name Club.

Two weeks ago I overheard them talking with Hal, explaining how they know that  
making and serving the meal is an important ministry – but they also do it to feed their own souls.

**God's Shalom is *within* *them* –  
poured out to be *among* *others*  
in fellowship.**

**[lift small chalice]**

This is an 8-year-old girl.

Remembering a phrase we speak in greeting  
at the beginning of each service,

she takes the message out into the world

and writes on the door of her clubhouse:

“We the club are welcome to let anyone in. it is an open and affirming club. We are the helpful club. That means we must respect the world and help people in need.”

**God’s Kin-dom is *within* her –  
poured out to be *among* us  
in the world.**

And out in the world we experience  
such moments of the Kingdom  
present among us and still unfolding  
**[lift 2 chalices]:**

from the cease-fire agreement  
signed in Darfur this week **[pour]**

to continued compassionate efforts for  
the people of Haiti,  
Chile,  
New Orleans,  
Sichuan Province,  
Indonesia,  
and other devastations that much of the world has forgotten  
but that individuals continue to care for. **[pour]**

These are signs of God’s Shalom  
poured out all around us –

*and we are its vessels.*

The Kingdom of God is, in fact,  
within and among *us*,  
God’s creation.

Not in some time to come just around the corner;  
or in a new system we try to create and control;  
but here and now and still unfolding.

May we be revealers of its love.  
Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> p. 329.

<sup>ii</sup> Luke 22:20