

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
Revelation 1:4b-8
Psalm 93
John 18:33-37

Sermon November 21st, 2021

God's Reality Challenges Our Reality

For the past three years, Jesus has been travelling across Galilee, and into Jerusalem, inviting people to follow him. Inviting people to be part of this new kingdom Jesus has been promoting.

A kingdom that stands in stark contrast to the Empire the people are currently participants in. A kingdom that isn't created by violence but by a philosophical concept called truth. A kingdom where the king goes around healing people instead of marginalizing those who have disabilities or illness. A kingdom where the king forgives his enemies, and even prays for them. Instead of a kingdom where the king intimidates and crucifies his enemies. A kingdom where the king takes care of the poor. Not a kingdom where the king exploits the poor. A kingdom and king that is a breath of fresh air for the people who choose to follow Jesus. People who have suffered a lot at the hands of the current king.

Now, living in a democratic society we don't connect so easily with images of king/emperor, or kingdom/empire. Being a country with a constitutional monarch, we have brief encounters with the nobility of the United Kingdom (**Image**). We recognize the Queen of England. But we are far past the years of using this royal language to understand our current society or government.

That being said, we can redefine God's kingdom as God's reality in our current context. And our world as our own reality. Whether that is our reality as a community or as an individual.

And like Pilate find outs in his encounter with Jesus. God's reality doesn't always mesh with our reality. Sometimes God's reality challenges our reality.

There are many examples of this in our lives and in our world. One example I can think of is our need to get even with those who hurt us. Now, revenge is different then justice. It is okay to want the people who hurt us to be held accountable for their actions. But when we start thinking that we want them to suffer lots or do something to hurt them back then we are crossing into the territory of revenge.

For Jesus, he invites us to forgive those who hurt us. To wish them well. To pray for them (**Image**). This doesn't mean we have to be in a relationship with them, and keep

getting hurt. But we are invited to let go of those grudges or that need to hurt them back.

This isn't easy. It's hard to forgive someone who hurts us. Especially if they are unrepentant. Sometimes God's reality challenges our reality.

Another example that comes to mind for me is how we treat those who live in poverty. God invites us to care for the poor (**Image**). To help them out wherever possible. Whether that is some form of monetary gift to help them meet their basic needs. Or to be present with them. Listening to them. Speaking out for them. Valuing them as members of our community.

Unfortunately, our reality is much different in how we understand and treat people living in poverty. The dominant world view in our society teaches us that those living in poverty deserve their lot. They are lazy. They will abuse our helping hand if we extend it. These views shape how we treat people living in poverty. We marginalize them. We ignore them. We are more likely to harm them.

Sometimes God's reality challenges our reality.

During this pandemic we have wrestled with God's call to rest. Some of us have had to work many more hours during this pandemic like our health care workers. Many of them are probably missing the days where they were able to find some rest. Yet, for the majority of us we had our lives halted. Many of us probably wish we can get back to the activities and busy schedules we have become accustomed to.

Before the pandemic our dominant world view encouraged us to be on the go, getting involved in as much as we could. If we were not constantly on the move we were seen as weird or lazy. This attitude unfortunately, led to high levels of burnout, as people felt overworked.

So, when the restrictions during the pandemic forced us to stop and sit for a while. One would think it would be a nice relief.

On the contrary, this has been hard for many of us as we are not used to it. Instead, of reconnecting with God's call to rest on Sabbath (**Image**). We wrestled with feelings of isolation and unfulfillment. Doing our best to speed up the process of getting back to what we defined as normal.

Our need to be on the go all the time is challenged often with God's call to rest.

Sometimes God's reality challenges our reality.

There are many other examples we could think of where we see our reality coming into conflict with God's reality. Like where do we devote our time and energy? Is it on God

or is it on other things? Do we look at the current challenges in our world with hope and peace in God's promise? Or do we live with a lot of anxiety and feel despair towards our future? Do we see value in people who struggle with their mental health or with a physical disability (**Image**)? Or, do we see them as a burden on society?

Sometimes God's reality challenges our reality.

Well, in our reading of the book of Revelation we see that Jesus has made us a kingdom. Jesus has invited us into living out this truth, living out God's reality in our lives.

The kingdom is not from here as Jesus states to Pilate. But the kingdom is very much present in our world through those Jesus invites into the movement. Us. The church.

What Jesus hopes for us and for the world is that God's reality becomes our reality. I'm sure this is what Jesus hopes for Pilate and the Empire. Why fight with each other. Let's live together in God's reality.

If we reflect on Jesus' hope for us for a minute. Wouldn't living in God's reality all the time be great? Could you imagine feeling well rested all the time? Could you imagine never getting bent out of shape over things that don't go your way? Could you imagine people actually receiving the help they need? Could you imagine dealing with all this garbage happening in our world without feeling anxious all the time? Could you imagine a world without all this garbage?

Unfortunately, our reality sometimes overshadows God's reality. Sometimes our natural instincts kick in. Or our situation or experience makes things more complicated for us. Or our peers or other influences are difficult to overcome.

Sometimes we need to lean on God's gracious love to refocus us on God's reality. Sometimes we need a day like today where we can reflect once again on the promise that Jesus is our king (**Image**). That God's kingdom is our reality when we choose to follow Christ.

This Sunday is the last Sunday of the church year. Next Sunday is our New Years Day. Next Sunday is the time for a fresh start. The time for a Christian New Years resolution. And what our gospel is encouraging us to focus on in setting this New Years resolution is to keep trying to be the kingdom God created us to be. To live in God's reality as much as we can. So, that those who we encounter can get a taste of this kingdom. Get a taste of God's loving rule through Christ Jesus.

We might still struggle to live this way all the time, but when we do live this way, it is sure a breath of fresh air. To stand in God's reality. Even for a moment.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks for Christ our king who reveals to us your kingdom come. Your reality. May we lean on this reality. Living it out in our daily lives. And when our reality clashes with your reality. Forgive us. Love us with your Grace. Renew us to refocus on your reality. So, that others may get a foretaste of the feast to come through us living out your reality. In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**

© copyright, 2021, Wallace Bornhuse. All rights reserved.