

The Kingdom of God is in the Midst of You

The Gospel of Luke

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Bible Text: 2 Kings 5:9-14; Luke 17

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Our Old Testament Scripture reading is 2 Kings 5:9-14. This is a time of great rebellion in the history of Israel and the Lord had given Syria victory over Israel as part of the consequences and the discipline for their worshiping other gods. As a result of this, there was a young girl that was carried off, captured, and she was a servant in the house of Naaman who was a commander in the army of the king of Syria. Naaman had leprosy. This could have been any of a handful of skin diseases, whatever it was, it was bad. Naaman had leprosy and this serving girl remembered all that she had heard about the work of the prophet Elisha back in Israel and she recommended that they seek after Elisha as a way that Naaman could be healed.

So, Elisha is willing to do this. He's pursuing coming together with Naaman, giving him instructions about how he is to be healed and that is where we pick up the story in verse 9 of this chapter. 2 Kings 5:9-14,

“9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.' 11 But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, 'Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 But his servants came near and said to him, 'My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, “Wash, and be clean”?’ 14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Our New Testament reading is Luke 17. It's also the text for our sermon as we continue our series in the gospel of Luke. In the first part of the sermon, we're going to be focusing

on, especially verses 11-19, the story of Jesus cleansing ten lepers as being the core, the center, the hinge for this chapter. So, as we read this chapter as a whole, there are all sorts of details. We're not going to be able to keep them all in our mind as we read it right now, but I would encourage you especially to pay attention beginning at verse 11, to the story of Jesus cleansing the ten lepers.

Reading all then of Luke 17,

“1 And he said to his disciples, 'Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, “I repent,” you must forgive him.’

“5 The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' 6 And the Lord said, 'If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, “Be uprooted and planted in the sea,” and it would obey you.

“7 'Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and recline at table”? 8 Will he not rather say to him, “Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink”? 9 Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.”’

“11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13 and lifted up their voices, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' 14 When he saw them he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went they were cleansed. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered, 'Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' 19 And he said to him, 'Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.'

“20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, 21 nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.' 22 And he said to the

disciples, 'The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 And they will say to you, "Look, there!" or "Look, here!" Do not go out or follow them. 24 For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. 25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot - they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all - 30 so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. 34 I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. 35 There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.' 37 And they said to him, 'Where, Lord?' He said to them, 'Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.'"

Thanks be to God for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, you have told us that your kingdom is in our midst but our faith is weak and we so often fail to see it and to live in the light of it and so we ask you now to use your word, to give us the faith to see the reality of this your kingdom, that we might live as its citizens and serve it in all that we do. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, one of the main purposes of the word of God and one of the main purposes of our gathering around that word on the Lord's Day is to answer this question: what are you doing tomorrow? Now, I know if someone simply asked you what are you doing tomorrow, for most of us that shouldn't be too complicated of a question to ask. It might be changing diapers. You might be standing in front of a classroom. You might be taking care of animals. You might be fixing an engine. You might be putting bread in an oven. All sorts of things you might be doing. Well, God's word comes to us this morning to say, "When you are doing all of those things, what are you really doing? What purpose is any of it? What role is it playing in life? What is your life? What is it about? When you get up tomorrow, when you awake in the morning, what is it that is supposed to be motivating you? How do you view life? When you do all of those things, what are you doing?"

One of the ways the Bible answers that question is by telling us when we are doing it. Doing it on Monday. When are we? What time in history? When are we in God's purposes for the world? You see, this is one of the main things we so easily forget. We so easily fall into this way of thinking that says, "On Sunday, we're doing all the

Christian/spiritual/religious stuff. Then when we go into the week tomorrow, and all the things God has given us to do, we're doing something else.” We think all of this language of kingdom and gospel and salvation and all of this, that's sort of a spiritual thing that gets compartmented in one part of our life and then we go into the week and that is something else.

Jesus, in our passage this morning, proclaims the kingdom is among us. It is in the midst of us. It is in us. The kingdom is not off in a compartment somewhere, a container where you can control it and tame it and make it serve the purposes you want it to serve. It is among us and when God's word proclaims the good news of the kingdom it's not so that you can add a spiritual component to your life, it's so that all of life can be turned upside down, all of life being changed and caught up in the purposes of God's kingdom. That is what Luke has for us this morning in this chapter: the good news of the kingdom proclaimed in a way that is meant to change everything.

We're going to see this in three levels and this isn't going to be strictly sections of this passage. What we're going to see is that Jesus is giving us one picture, one picture of being in the midst of a kingdom and, therefore, having a life that flows from it and there are three parts to that picture. First, the presence of the kingdom, that it is here now. Second, the future of the kingdom, that there is more to come. And third then, the life of the kingdom.

First, the presence of the kingdom. The key verse for how we're going to be understanding and wrestling with this chapter this morning is what Jesus says in verse 21. Begin at verse 20, right in the middle of our chapter. Jesus has been talking to his disciples but in a way that the Pharisees are hearing; they're hearing what's going on and they say this, “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.’” The Pharisees are hearing all that Jesus has been saying and Luke and Matthew and the gospel writers summarized Jesus' message as the good news of the kingdom. So, we can imagine maybe someone starting to believe, especially after seeing the miracles, that maybe they should be listening to what Jesus is saying. Maybe there is something to this stuff he's saying about the kingdom but what they know for sure is that this can't be it. This is not what we expected.

They were expecting an earthly victory, a ruler who would then be Israel's victory over the Romans and so on. They were not expecting it to come in the form of well, pretty much everything about Jesus. And so they asked, “When is this happening? You're talking about the kingdom. When is it going to come?” Jesus says, “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” We have to be careful. When we say those words we can be really tempted to over-spiritualize it, to think Jesus is saying, “It's okay. I'm in your heart.” No, no, that's not the point here at all. What Jesus is saying is, “It's among you,” meaning it is here, it is now and this is something we're going to unpack this in terms of the miracle here with the lepers but as we do this, you need to hear this as something the church today desperately needs to hear, especially in the country in which we live. The

church is convinced that the kingdom is something in the far off future, that we're all just huddling on a ship that's going down and we're waiting for, hopefully, one day the kingdom to come and that is the exact mistake that folks were making in Jesus' day and Jesus says, "It is here now."

You see, this is what the miracle of Jesus healing the lepers was about. All of his miracles, at least part of it, was that he was acting out the kingdom. He was showing that it was present so that Jesus didn't just say, "the kingdom is here," everywhere he went, you saw glimmers of it, everywhere you went you saw it coming to expression, you saw it flowering. If the darkness of sin and death was like winter, everywhere Jesus went, things started to thaw: the snow started to melt; green things started to grow. That's what the miracles were expressions of. I've said many times in our series in the gospel of Luke: Jesus wasn't just performing miracles because he was wanting to do good things. Most lepers were not being healed. What Jesus did do, was proclaiming something about his kingdom.

So, let's look at this miracle for a moment, in the middle of this passage, how it is proclaiming the kingdom of God being present in Jesus. Well, what happens? There are ten lepers, they stand at a distance because that's the rule for lepers, they have to stay away and they proclaim to Jesus, "Master, have mercy on us!" And one of the first things we need to remember is that if you go back in the book of Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy and so on and you find the passages, especially in Leviticus 14, that talk about leprosy and what it was, the point to leprosy is not that it was necessarily a horribly painful skin disease. It could've been that but the point to leprosy is that you were unclean. You will find references to a house that could have leprosy, a tent could have leprosy. It was mold. It was an uncleanness and it symbolized the uncleanness of sin.

So, for Israel, leprosy was this broad category of conditions that symbolized what sin does to us and so the result was that individuals who had it were excluded from the community. Now, sometimes that's because that they had a terrible disease and it was contagious and so it was good for them to be excluded. But other times, it was simply a symbolic matter saying, "Here's what sin does." They could not go to the tabernacle and temple to worship. They could not fellowship with the community as all the feasts and so on described in Deuteronomy. They would have been excluded from that.

So, when these men cry out, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" they're referring to all of that. Some may have had a horrible disease, some were just separated from the community and they're saying, "Have mercy!"

Verse 14, "When he saw them he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went they were cleansed." Go and show yourselves to the priests. What's that about? Well, in the Old Testament, especially in Leviticus 14, you find instructions for what someone who had leprosy was to do if they were cleansed. Remember, if they had leprosy, they were cut off from the community so what would a leper be really tempted to want to do? "I'm better. It's gone. Trust me, it's gone. I don't have it anymore.

Let me back in.” And what a leper had to do, you couldn't just take his word for it, he had to go to the priest and be examined and what a priest would do is on his authority, he would proclaim, “The leprosy is cleansed. It's gone.” And what you find in all of those passages is it would be this, obviously, this exciting amazing thing. “The leprosy is gone! I can go to the feasts! I can live with my family! I can go to work! I can go to worship!” and so on.

But there is not one word about how to take the leprosy away. So, if you think about what that leprosy symbolized: sin and the consequences of sin, the law of Moses was saying it can be taken away and when it's taken away, here's how you handle it, here's how you celebrate it, here's how you respond. And in there, there was a promise that one day it will be taken away but there is no way to actually do it. What does Jesus do? He actually takes it away. He actually solves the problem.

So, the point here is not just that Jesus is compassionate, although that is certainly a point. The point is not just that Jesus is powerful, though that is certainly an important point of the passage. The point is: Jesus is doing what Moses could not do. Jesus is bringing what Israel longed for, what was promised to them and the way the Old Testament, especially in the prophets, summarized everything Israel was waiting for, was with the word “the kingdom.” One of the things that they knew was that when the kingdom comes, there will be healing. Jesus does what Israel could only hope for. You see, brothers and sisters, this is the glory of our Savior, that he can take away all of those things that leprosy symbolized: the sin, the consequences of sin, the brokenness of it. And so, when Jesus does that, in his actions, he's proclaiming “the kingdom is here.”

But there's more. What happens? Ten of them are cleansed and they go off to the priests and we're told one of them, verse 15, “Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.” They're on their way to the temple to be cleansed, one of them and the numbers are fairly condemning, aren't they? One of the ten decides to go back and thank Jesus and haven't we often heard this as an exhortation to gratitude, maybe you heard this in Sunday School: there were ten lepers, only one went back to say, “Thank you.” What's the lesson? Come on, people, say thank you more often. Be grateful. And there is an element of truth in that, obviously, that is a true thing and there is an element of that being what's being done in this passage, that we can think that perhaps these other nine were ungrateful. But what I want to suggest to you is this: it is entirely possible that those other nine were just as thankful as this one, that those other nine were just as eager to thank God as this one. What's the difference between the nine who didn't come back and the one who did?

You need to think about this: if you were an Israelite, you were Jewish and at the time of Jesus, and God miraculously delivered you from something. This amazing thing that God did and you knew you needed to express gratitude to God for it and you wanted to, in a special way, express this gratitude to God for what he had done, what would you do? You would go to the temple. You would not go find the itinerant rabbi/teacher who told you to trust in God and God will heal you. Great, he told you a good thing to do but

if you're going to thank God, what are you going to do? You're going to go to the temple. What is the special thing about the one who returns to Jesus? He knows that if you are going to thank God, you go to Jesus because who is Jesus? He is the one in whom God is visiting Israel. He is the very presence of God. That all the things that you used to go to the temple for, now you go to Jesus for them.

So, the point to the one leper is not that he was more thankful, that he had learned the moral lesson better and make sure you say "thank you" for things, the point to the one leper is he knew that Jesus was the one in whom God had come to Israel. He knew, again, how throughout the prophets did Israel summarize that hope, he knew the kingdom was here and where was that kingdom found? Not in the temple, but in Christ. You see, brothers and sisters, this is always first of all, the point to Scripture, pointing to Jesus. Look to him. He is glorious. He is wonderful. He is the one in whom the kingdom has come.

So, those who are trusting in Jesus, they are getting the message: the kingdom is here now. The leper goes back to thank God in Christ. The disciples are hearing the message: the kingdom is now. We read earlier, verses 20 and 21, when Jesus says, "The kingdom is in the midst of you."

But there is another danger and this is the danger expressed many times in the gospel as well. On the one hand there is the danger of folks forgetting the presence of the kingdom, on the other hand, there is the danger of folks forgetting the future of the kingdom. Because, you see, the prophets had made it sound like, reasonably, understandably, that when the kingdom comes, that's going to be it. There is going to be resurrection; the gospel is going to cover the nations; it will be the new creation; everything's going to be done. So, as the disciples begin to believe that the kingdom really is here in Jesus, they're going to be thinking, "Well, then this is it. We're done. Everything is completed." So, one of the great burdens of the gospels is Jesus saying on the one hand, "The kingdom is here and now," but on the other hand, "There's a lot more to come." So, that is the burden then of the whole second half of this passage: Jesus telling the disciples, "There is more."

Verse 22, "And he said to the disciples, 'The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, "Look, there!" or "Look, here!" Do not go out or follow them.'" Jesus knows a horrible time is coming for the disciples, especially when the Romans are going to come and destroy Jerusalem in 70 AD. Jesus knows that time is coming and he's getting the disciples ready for that and he's saying, "There's going to be a time when you're going to really want this to all be done. You're going to want the kingdom to be here in its finality." This is the language of the prophets. He says, "You're going to want to see one of the days of the Son of man and you're going to be so eager to think that it's done, it's over, we don't have to do this anymore, that when someone comes around saying, Hey, look it's here. It's here. Here's the kingdom. It's done. It's complete. It's final. You're going to be tempted to believe them," and Jesus says, "Don't do it."

Verse 24, “For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.” The point being: when Jesus returns and the kingdom is complete, we won't be debating, unsure whether or not it's the case. It will be obvious. Just as the lightning flashes through the sky, so it will be clear when the Son of man has come.

This is the burden of many of his parables. This is the main point of the parables to say there's an in-between time coming. A time coming where more has to happen. Where the gospel has to go to the nations. And he's getting his people ready to live in that in-between time. Brothers and sisters, the gospel comes to us saying the same thing: that we are in the in-between time. We're in a bit of a different in-between. The disciples were still before the destruction of Jerusalem and that was a day of the Son of man, one of the times when Jesus visited Israel in judgment and in the coming of his kingdom but he also makes it clear throughout the Scriptures that there is yet a final coming of the Son of man and that we are living in that in-between.

This is what I meant in the introduction when I said to understand what we're doing tomorrow, we have to ask the question of what time is it? When are we doing it? Do you recognize in your life the ways we can forget the presence of the kingdom and the future of the kingdom? You need to recognize this. You are those living in the in-between time. Jesus has already come but he has not yet come in his fullness, in the finality of his coming and we live in the in-between. But theologians have called “the already” and “not yet”; the kingdom already here, not yet complete.

What does it look like to forget the presence of the kingdom? What does that look like? All of us have experienced this in some way. What that looks like is when you look at the world and I mean that in the broadest way possible: you look at your life, you look at the news, you look at world events, you look at the movement of history for the last 100 years. In whatever way, you look at the world and you conclude: we're in trouble. This is all going down hill. This is all bad news. What we're tempted to do when we feel that way is to forget the presence of the kingdom, that Jesus said even before the gospel began to go to the nations, he said, “The kingdom is in the midst of you.” And that presence of the kingdom means you live in the midst of a world that is ruled and governed by King Jesus and that his mission will be successful. His mission will be victorious.

It means, here he uses the language, “living in the days of the Son of man.” That's language especially from the Prophet Daniel. Ezekiel speaks this way, other prophets as well, but especially from the Prophet Daniel. You might remember the vision God gave Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel remembered and interpreted, a vision of a statue made of different materials and rock crushes the statue and grows into a mountain that fills the whole world and Daniel said that rock is the kingdom of God that is coming. That was looking to the future. Jesus says that kingdom is here now.

Brothers and sisters, that confidence needs to change how we live because, you see, if we don't believe the kingdom is here now, how are we going to live? Well, we're going to want to get in our holy huddle and just try to last it out. You sort of get into the bomb

shelter, get in the tornado storm shelter, get in the lifeboat, "We've just got to make it through this." But Jesus says that's not the time you're living in. You're living in a time of the kingdom being here now, of the gospel spreading to cover the world.

But what does it look like if we forget the future of the kingdom? That we're not yet in its fullness? You see, there are those in the Christian church who have in a right way, gotten excited about that optimism to say, "The kingdom is here. It is growing." But then the temptation is to forget but it's not yet here in its fullness and so how does it grow? It grows through suffering. Through persecution. It grows in an unexpected way: think of the parable of the mustard seed, of the parables Jesus gave like leaven filling dough. In an unexpected way, an unseen way, the kingdom grows.

What's another way we forget the future of the kingdom? Well, we forget it when we get apathetic. Apathy. We no longer have motivating us that sense every day of the week that we are living lives aimed at a future, directed toward a future that God has promised, that the kingdom has come and we live lives that are part of that growing kingdom so that in all that we do, we have the life of the kingdom. You see, this passage is shot through all throughout with Jesus saying, thirdly if you're following along, with Jesus saying, "This is how you live in the kingdom."

He gave us four exhortations in the beginning of the passage: temptations are sure to come, fighting against sin. He gives an exhortation to forgive over and over and over and over. That if you are living a life transformed by the kingdom, we are people then who fight against sin and then forgive one another, it says seven times. Another time, he says seventy times seven. What's the point? Seven is the number of completion, you never stop forgiving. Verses 5 and 6, he exhorts us to faith. Verses 7-10, he talks about our work. You will say we are but unworthy servants meaning when we are being faithful to God, it's not a matter of pride, look what I have accomplished, it's all humble service. In all of that he's saying, "This is how your life is transformed by the kingdom."

Wherein all those exhortations about warning of judgment coming and he talks about, verse 31, "On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back." There is this sense of if you are living for that promised future, then that affects how you hold onto the things of this life, that they are good, they are valuable, they are to be used as part of God's kingdom but they are not ultimate. There is more coming. In fact, this is important: near the end, when he talks about there being two people and one of them is taken in judgment and the other is left, those two are still doing the things of this life. Verse 35, "There will be two women grinding together." The point being: we're going to continue on doing the things of this life but in a way that holds it loosely. We hold it, but we hold it loosely, looking forward to that future that God has promised, living with focus.

There is another part of the life of the kingdom and that's back in the parable of the ten lepers. I skipped the most important part of the parable. We are told in verse 16, the leper who comes back now, "he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a

Samaritan.” Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan? When we hear “Samaritan” we think, “Oh, a person who helps people.” That's not the point. The Samaritans in Israel's culture at this time were the most despised, excluded, looked-down upon people in the culture. He was a Samaritan, the one who came back.

What does Jesus say in verse 18, “Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” He's rubbing the point in. “Look Israel, why is a foreigner the one who gets it right? Who knows he should be praising God where I am? That I am the one in whom the kingdom has come? Why is it a foreigner who gets this?” Earlier in the story of the gospel, Jesus takes on an Israelite city in this way. He says, “You all need to remember, there were many widows in Israel back in Elisha's day, but Elisha went to the widow of Zarephath.” He says, “There were many lepers in Israel but Elisha went to Naaman and it was Naaman who was healed.” And Jesus was telling them that the purpose of that story way back then was to say, “God's plan was not just for Israel but that through Israel, all of the world would be blessed.” That's what he promised Abraham in Genesis 12, “Through you, all the families of the earth will be blessed.” And Jesus is latching onto that story here. He is saying, “I have come so that through Israel, everyone might find blessing and look, it's a foreigner, that is, a Gentile.” One of us. A Gentile who went back to worship God in Christ.

Jesus is fulfilling Israel's purpose. What was that purpose? All the way back to Naaman, that all the nations be blessed through Israel. He's fulfilling that purpose and then he gives that purpose to his church. This is why Luke is being extra sure to tell us this story. Luke, if he wanted to, he could have left off the foreigner part and been just as truthful and just as accurate but he includes that so that we know the point to this is that Jesus' mission is for everyone. Because Luke is the one who writes the books of Acts. So, he says, “You are in a time when the kingdom is present living for the time when it will,” because there's yet a future part of the kingdom. What does the life look like in that in-between? It is the life of a mission because God's mission is for the nations, for the foreigner. What was Israel tempted to do? To say, “This is just for us. Yay! The kingdom came. We're going to keep it.” And Jesus and the apostles that had constantly challenged them, “It's for everyone.” What are we tempted to do? “Yay! It's for us. Let's keep it. Keep it here. Don't mess it up.” Jesus says, “No, it's for everyone. It's for the foreigner. It's for the Samaritan. It's for the outsider. It's for those who are lost. It is for those who need it.”

So, what we are called to do tomorrow – remember the question: what are you doing tomorrow? You are living as part of that kingdom in all that you do. You are living on mission as part of God showing what his kingdom is like: forgiving, fighting against sin, living against faith, holding the things of this world loosely. Living as citizens of his kingdom in all that we do. What is the prayer he gave us? What is the prayer in the Lord's Prayer when he talks about the kingdom? Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, where? On earth as it is in heaven. That's the prayer shaping our lives in the in-between time, between the already and the not yet. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. You see, that's your mission for every day of the week. Living as the way, the means, the presence of that kingdom in the world now.

We're about to sing "Lead on O King Eternal" and there are the beautiful words at the end of this hymn, actually in the middle of it,

"For not with swords' loud clashing,
Or roll of stirring drums,
With deeds of love and mercy,
The heavenly kingdom comes."

Now, we've all heard those kinds of words used before in a way that sounded, eh, a little bit cheesy, we can admit that. But there is an amazing truth in this, that the kingdom comes in and through the church living as the kingdom. That is what we're doing on Monday.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, help us to see and believe what time we are living in as citizens of your kingdom that has come but awaits a promised future. Do this for us through your Spirit for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.