
Thy Kingdom Come

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 16 November 2025

Isaiah 65:17-25 • Luke 21:5-19



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

Jesus spent a lot of time during his ministry on earth talking about what was to come. He loved his people, and he wanted them to understand just what following him would mean. Although the Jews expected a Saviour who would lead them swiftly to victory, safety and prosperity, that is not what Jesus promised. Rather, he wanted to lead them into the truth, and a way of life in Communion with his Father. The easy way was not the goal: the way of truth was the goal. Jesus, a man of peace, did not promise peace to his followers. He did not say that the way would be easy or painless. He promised to lead them to God.

Is there a parallel to this in our daily lives? It occurs to me that any pursuit on earth, to be worthwhile, must entail some pain. If you want to excel at football, you will be no stranger to hard work — and certainly pain — along the way. But the goal, if you reach it, will be your reward, as you train your body and your mind to play the game as well as you can.

I've taken up the trumpet. I took it up in about 1972. And I'm still learning. But a few years ago I decided that playing popular music wasn't enough, and I started trying to play the really high notes that you need for Baroque-style music — you know, Bach and Handel and that sort of thing, where you have to play way up high. It's really hard on the lips, and sometimes I feel like I'm banging my head against the wall trying to learn how to do it. There's one particular piece by the English composer Henry Purcell which is absolutely beautiful — the trumpet tone, when done correctly, is so pure in that upper register that it sounds almost like a flute. But I can't play it yet. And sometimes I feel that I'm not getting any better, no matter how hard I try. But some days I get just a little encouragement, when I'm able to play a piece, or a bit of a piece, that I couldn't play before. And that keeps me going.

Perhaps faith is like that. Jesus certainly understood that what he was asking his disciples to do would be hard sometimes, as they encountered opposition from the Pharisees and others who didn't follow Jesus. He warned his followers that they would be betrayed by their family and friends, that they would be hated, and perhaps even killed. But he asks them to hang on, because he will be with them. Not a hair of their heads will perish. If they persist, they will reach that prize — eternal life in the presence of God.

So Jesus is talking about persistence. But then he also talks about what we often call “the end times”, when this age will end, and Jesus will return and institute the Kingdom of God. It's a frightening picture: wars, insurrections, earthquakes, famines, plagues.

Jesus gives a sort of chronology, which runs like this:

- arrest, persecution, betrayal by friends and family
- wars and insurrections, famines, plagues
- great portents and signs from heaven
- the end of the age and the institution of the Kingdom of God

It seems very specific, and there are many people who claim that we are seeing these things now. Maybe, maybe not. But we must stop and think before we make assumptions about something which is God's decision, and for God alone to know. Jesus warns us also not to follow those who say they are the Messiah, or who say, “The time is near!” Don't go after them, he says. Next week's Gospel talks about being prepared, and that is the message here. Live your life in the faith of Jesus Christ, following him as well as you can, and God will be with you. If nothing else, we should realise that if God wants us to live through difficult and dangerous times, we will live through them. How can anything we do affect God's will for us? How can we, by our own cleverness, escape the fate God has planned for us? We must just have faith and trust to his love and mercy.

But again, Jesus reassures us that not a hair of our heads will perish. If we follow Jesus, we will get through the time of trial. And our reward for faith is discussed by Isaiah in our first reading. When the new heavens and the new earth are created, then we who are faithful will discover a life of joy and delight, of peace and love, in the direct presence of God. No more tears, no more sorrow, no more early death, but life in its fullest sense.

Going back to my trumpet, I have had some moments when I could play really well, some moments when I broke through my weaknesses and bad technique and God granted me a glimpse of — shall I say — trumpet heaven? In those moments, playing stopped being a difficult challenge, and the notes simply flowed smoothly and beautifully from the bell of my horn. Maybe this is akin to what they call the “runner’s high” for a long distance runner; and maybe it happens in all pursuits. I consider this to be a taste of that distant time when God makes everything right, and we all live with him in harmony and love.

When in a few minutes we pray together the Lord’s Prayer, think about those lovely words, “Your kingdom, come! Your will be done on earth as in heaven.” It will come. God’s will *will* be done — and we who are faithful will see that blessed day dawn. To the glory of God. Amen.