

# The Kingdom of God

TRINITY 18 – A 2017 – SPRINGLINE PARISH

[Isaiah 25.1-9, Psalm 23; Philippians 4. 1-9; Matthew 22. 1-14]

There is a crisis of confidence in institutions, political, financial and religious. In the context of the implosion of the myth of progress and development, the *Kingdom of Man* is an image of failure because it is guided by a policy of selfish gain, profit, personal success, prestige and unfettered pleasure and power.

In this context, the *Kingdom of God* becomes remarkably succinct and relevant because Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God. Using parables, Jesus teaches what he means by the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a running theme in the OT and NT.

The term constitutes a central feature of Jesus' proclamation to his contemporaries. It is the core of Jesus' teaching, preaching as well as the early Christians.

The Old Testament and the New Testament speak of the Kingdom of God as:

- *A future time when God's rule and reign will be established*
- *All nations will live in peace acknowledging and worshipping Yahweh as their sovereign*
- *New era of peace and blessing, even between humans and animals*
- *God reigns over creation, history and affairs of Israel and nations*
- *Prophet Amos warns that there are also forces at work that undermine the Kingdom of God, namely the perversity of God's people*
- *Future coming of the Lord at the end of time*
- *New birth and transformation*
- *Individual religious experience and experience of cosmic transformation*
- *Dramatic eschatological events and parousia – end times.*
- *The significance of the "now" – crisis of decision: to say 'yes' to God rather than a 'no'.*

Our liturgy and lectionary lead us to a climax as we approach the end of our liturgical year.

Jesus has been using "kingdom parables" in the preceding Sundays and today he gives us the parable of the wedding feast.

Today's gospel is from Matthew 22.1-14

1. Verse 2. Jesus says that the Kingdom of God may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. **The "kingdom" is depicted as the messianic banquet** derived from Isaiah 25. 6-10, as we heard in the first reading (Isaiah 25.1-9)

2. *His servants* – the prophets
3. *The invited* – **an invitation is a free act of kindness; God is not obliged to invite.**
4. *Everything is ready* – the concept ‘ready’, ‘prepared’ occurs three times – twice here and once in verse 8.
5. *They paid no attention*, made light of – **the invited deny the urgency, they become careless with the things of God.**
8. **The guests must show an appropriate moral and spiritual response.**
9. *Street corners* - the gates to markets of an oriental city where crowds swarm. The people there are **the outcasts of Israel, the tax collectors and people in despised trades.**
10. *The good and bad* – **sinner too are invited, and the Church in history is a mixed body of saints and sinners.**
11. *Wedding clothes*: **this represents a converted life full of good deeds. Sinners are invited but are expected to repent.**
14. *Many are invited* – Matthew distinguishes **between the initial call of salvation and final election and perseverance.** The latter are not automatic. **Believers are thus warned against complacency.** Matthew has modelled his tradition on the parable of the wicked tenants (21. 33-46)

*What about our Church?*

*How do we grow as the Kingdom of God?*

*How do we testify that we are transformed, converted, made new in Christ?*

The Kingdom of God (Heaven) is a major theme in the teachings of Jesus.

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.”* (Mark 1.15) Jesus also tells us: *“The Kingdom of God is within you (or ‘in the midst of you’)”* (Luke 17.21) In other words, our lives must reflect signs of God’s Kingdom.

As Jesus himself taught and preached, the establishment of the Kingdom of God is the core vision and mission for any Church. It is the same for us.

A conversion of heart and life is a ‘must’ to enjoy the eternal banquet of the Kingdom of Heaven – a conversion from selfishness to love of God and love of neighbours, a conversion from a ‘me-centred life’ to a ‘God-centred’, ‘Other-centred’ life!

**The “wedding clothes” required as we heard in the gospel represents a converted life full of good deeds. Sinners are invited but are expected to repent.**

*It is never late for us to answer the invitation of Jesus to be part of His Kingdom, to repent of our sins and to believe in him and in his gospel.*

*It is never too late to turn to God and submit to His sovereignty and Kingdom of Love in our lives. Let us pray.*

[ST Mattapally]