

September 8, 2019 The Co-ordinates Luke 17:20-27

The first thing I want us to notice from the reading today, is that it begins with a question having been asked by the Pharisees. It is a fact that the Pharisees regarded Jesus as trouble. In the musical, *The Music Man*, there is a song early in the play. The words ring true of the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees. "There's trouble...right here in River City. And I mean trouble and that's spelled with a capital T." The Pharisees regarded Jesus as trouble with a capital T, meaning it could not possibly be worse. They were suspicious of HIS doctrine. They felt he was misleading the people. Worse, and far worse, they suspected Jesus was going to upset the balance of power between the Sanhedrin, The Rabbinical Council of Jerusalem, the Roman occupation of Judea and Herod, a puppet king appointed by the Romans.

It is absolutely true that the members of the Sanhedrin led by the High Priest, Caiaphas believed that if Jesus was going to lead a revolt of the people, or stir them up, such that a riot resulted, or a protest march, that Rome would deal harshly with the whole of the province. The Sanhedrin would lose any control it had of the situation. Jews would die. Anyone that could be identified with Jesus would either die or be enslaved. They feared the reduction of Jerusalem to dust and rubble.

So the question is not academic. The Pharisees were not seeking knowledge, nor were they endeavouring to

understand Jesus' point of view. They are trying to figure out what Jesus intentions are. And if Jesus believes HE is the Christ, they are expecting the worst to occur. The Pharisees understand that the Kingdom of God, is a physical Kingdom, with its capital in Jerusalem. A Kingdom like David built and ruled over. They know, they know that the Romans will never let it happen and all Jews will suffer if the Messiah makes a move to establish it. "When will the Kingdom of God come?" That is the question the Pharisees asked.

We would like to know the answer to that question too. We would like to figure out how and when the details of the future will unfold. When is Jesus going to return and take charge of things bringing justice for all, bringing world wide peace, making things right? When?

Jesus answer to that question was not what the Pharisees were looking for. Jesus answer did nothing to ease their minds or make them less anxious. And there is a Pharisaical streak that runs through the Church, evident in all the denominations. We either dismiss the Second Coming, which is heresy, or we dig for answers that are singularly hard to find. There are whole sections in Theological libraries on the coming of the Kingdom. Many of them claiming that they have figured out the time line, that they know the mysterious details. As we can plainly see here in Luke chapter 17, Jesus spoke of the nature of the Kingdom and its coming. But HE did

not satisfy those who wanted a timeline, a location, details, the co-ordinates,

Jesus said with every intention of making things clear, “The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation.” I keep repeating that the KJV of the Bible in English, is the most accurate word for word translation of these ancient Gospel accounts. Here is how the KJV of Luke 17:20 is translated. “The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” I said that is the best word for word translation of Luke 17:20. And that is true. Unfortunately it is the best translation into Shakespearian English. And I can tell you from first hand experience as a High School teacher a lot of us can read it, but we are not sure of what it means because the English language has changed in the last 5 centuries. Hence the need for more current translations. But it is obvious that whether you read it in a current translation or the old translation it fundamentally says the same thing. You can look and look and look, and analyze until the end of time, you are not going to find the answer to the question ‘when is the physical Kingdom of God going to be established?’

Sherlock Holmes could not figure this out. Clues there are. Hints there are. But observation of the evidence and analysis using human logic...Jesus said...Jesus said...is not going to provide the answer as to when. At another place and point in time Jesus said, “No man knows the hour, not even the Son of Man, but the Father only.” Humanity for Jesus was a

limitation. Is Jesus God? Yes HE is! But God with limitations so that people could see HIM, and hear HIM, and understand HIS lessons. In HIS human limitations, HE had the power to die for us, to save us. But when it comes to this question about the Kingdom...when...like the Bible scholars of His time and ours...there is no answer. A mystery. And we should not be surprised. If we cannot answer the question when by observation of the Scriptural evidence, and the signs of the times, what does that require of us? The one thing God has demanded and commanded us to do, to live by faith in HIM. To live by faith in HIM. 'Til it happens.

Human logic is incredible, but can be very blind. Jesus understood that. Well if we cannot figure out from the evidence past and present the when, surely we can figure out the place. Right? Wrong. Jesus anticipated the question. "The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say here it is, or there it is." Jesus said it is a futile exercise to try and determine when HE will come again and establish the Kingdom and even said the place would be a surprise when it happens. He said, 'Don't go there. Don't waste your time or your effort.

And then Jesus said something marvelous. "Because the Kingdom of God is within you." Last week Ron came up here and thanked you for the support you gave, the concern for his well being, you expressed, during his battle with cancer. I have tried to say the same, which is part of why I give you

detailed medical reports when something significant happens in my journey. Our Clerk of Session, John Mercer has been heard to say, "this church is my family." And I know he is not the only one to say that. I get asked by other ministers and some lay folk why I have spent the major part of 9 years serving as minister here...when I supposedly should be fully retired. I say it's a love affair between Barbara and I and St. Andrew's. If a cartoonist draws eyes as dots, the reaction I get is of a dot connected to a spiral line in both eyes. It means they do not understand what I am talking about. Jesus understood this one clearly. HE said, "The Kingdom of God is within you." That is why John says you are family. That is why Ron and I and others get emotional when we thank you for caring about us so. We have experienced the Kingdom of God in you as friends and neighbours, brothers and sisters. And if you do find us precious....you have experienced the Kingdom of God in us. You have been touched by the love of Jesus, the saving love of Jesus in us. In this era, we experience the Kingdom of God through the Church of Jesus Christ in individual believers.

The question lingers, about the return of Christ the King, the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus said one more word. "The Son of Man in HIS day will be like the lightning which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other." And here is how it is said in the KJV: "As the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of Man be in HIS day." During the thunder storm the lightning flashes.

And you can see the cloud formations so clearly. In that hour it will be just that obvious. Jesus will be recognized by you. His presence will be perfectly clear to you. I would also say two other things Jesus said. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither be afraid."

Let us pray;

Lord help us to continue to pursue the journey of faith. Make us responsive to those who are in pain of any kind in our own community. Help us to hear the cries of those who are far away, and grant that we might help them as we are able. We pray for the building of YOUR Kingdom on earth. Use us in your outpouring of grace. Use us when we see need. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.