

## "THY KINGDOM COME"

Purpose: to know inwardly that happiness is in the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Grace: conversion of the heart to the Kingdom of God.

1. In the previous meditations we professed our faith in God the Father Creator and Lord of all things, in his holiness, that is, in his divine being who saves us. We recognised the gifts of creation and redemption received from him and praised and thanked him for them.

Today we will meditate on the fact that each time we utter the invocation "Thy Kingdom come" we profess our faith in God's present sovereignty over creation and human history, and that this sovereignty will be fully realised and manifested at the end of history, when the fullness of salvation will be something realised for each of us and for all of us as a community of the saved. We profess our hope that happiness is in the coming of the Kingdom: the fulfilment of the Kingdom corresponds to our deepest aspirations and desires.

2. The proclamation of the Kingdom of God is the content of the mission of Jesus and the disciples.

In Mk 1:14-15 Jesus announces: "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel".

a. The Kingdom of God is the object of the very mission of Jesus and the disciples (Matt 10:7), as it is the content of the good proclamation of salvation. The Kingdom of God is a good that comes to us, in that it is made present in Jesus himself, who brings deliverance from evil, precisely because it affirms God's presence and his sovereignty over all created reality, hence also over evil, of whatever kind it may be (Mt 4:23; 12:28). To the Kingdom of God one must convert, turn one's heart, in order to receive it already now, in the expectation of its fulfilment, which will come with the full manifestation of God's victory over evil.

So, it is not a closeness in time or space, but a deeper closeness, a closeness in our heart. We must verify whether our heart is willing to receive the Kingdom of God that comes near to us.

We must convert our hearts: we must take on another mentality, another way of seeing things. It is, after all, a matter of moving from the pagan mentality that dwells within us to that of the Gospel.

In itself, the conversion of the heart is a work of God, but we must desire such a conversion, otherwise we get in the way of God's work, which is then not accomplished.

The Kingdom, then, is never definitively acquired, it is a reality that is continually approaching and must be welcomed with a heart that is always converted again. The fundamental conversion of our heart must always be placed first on the level of being and then of doing, otherwise we remain prisoners of the legalistic logic of the Old Testament.

b. Precisely because the Kingdom of God is an inner reality that requires such a conversion, it grows slowly within us and without fuss (Mt 13:31-33). This requires patience: we must know how to accept God's times. We must not delay God's time. The call to the Kingdom requires vigilance and shrewdness. It can be lost. The call to the Kingdom presents itself to each one of us, but we can be deaf to it, because we are attached to human things - to honour, wealth, prestige - in the end to ourselves, or, because we are not careful, not trained to listen to the voice of God speaking in us or to perceive the signs of his presence in our lives. It is foolishness to put off our decision for the Kingdom until tomorrow (Mt 25:1-13).

3. How the Kingdom of God comes near.

*Magnanimous - generous / forgiving*



The Kingdom of God comes to man as a vocation from God himself, often in an unexpected way. Even more unexpected are the conditions for receiving it.

Let us take Mk 10:17-31.

a. A first thing we notice is that this fellow who presents himself to Jesus follows a utilitarian and efficientistic logic. He asks: "What must I do to have eternal life?" (v. 17; Mt. 19:16: "...what good must I do to obtain eternal life?"; Lk. 10:25: "...what must I do to inherit eternal life?"). It places the emphasis on doing in order to obtain; the Kingdom of God, on the other hand, is not something that is produced by human effort, but is a gift from God.

The Kingdom of God comes to this one as a personal calling of Jesus, as a sign of a personal love ("having set his eyes on him, he loved him": v. 21).

b. The Kingdom of God comes as a radical demand (v. 21): nothing can be put before it, not only material goods, but not even spiritual goods, even the greatest family affections. The man is saddened by Jesus' request and goes away sorrowful because he had many goods, from which he does not want to detach himself (v. 22). His reaction is the consequence of the utilitarian mentality that imprisons him; after all, a pagan mentality.

The difficulty on our part in accepting the love of God manifested in the proposal of the Kingdom consists in not perceiving that the Kingdom of God is the supreme good because it lasts for eternity and is the only reality that can truly fill all the deepest aspirations of the human heart (v. 21: "you will have treasure in heaven").

That fellow is a good person, but when he is called by Jesus to take a step further, to abandon that utilitarian and pagan mentality, detaching himself from his wealth, he is unable to do so; he would rather come to a compromise with his current situation of wealth. He wants to keep his feet in two stirrups. He wants Jesus to follow him and not him to follow Jesus. He thinks he can manipulate Jesus. Riches and the pagan mentality they generate are an obstacle for him to accept the Kingdom of God. He misses his chance, so his salvation is in jeopardy because he has rejected a specific call from the Lord and said no to the love that Jesus offered him (v. 21). The young man started from the logic of possession and legalistic perfection (keep all the commandments) and remained in it. His salvation is in jeopardy (vv.23-27).

c. The disciples are stunned by Jesus' words, who questions the salvation of one who keeps the commandments, and question Jesus about their fate: they have left everything and followed him (v. 28). They have understood that the Lord is above all things, so they have heeded his call and left home, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children and fields for his sake and that of the gospel; because of this, the Lord calls them to a higher degree of love, that of enduring persecution for him, sharing in his cross in order to share in his own glory (vv. 28-31; Mt 19:28-29). They did not compromise, they did not want to pull the Lord to them.

In prayer they identify their own "wealth", which prevents them from converting to the Kingdom of God, in the order of possessing goods; in the order of affections; in the order of projects; in the order of ideas; in the order of seeking perfection, etc.

4. What value should we give to the Kingdom of God

Let us take the parables of the Kingdom in Mt 13:44-50

The first two, that of the treasure and the pearl (vv.44-45), indicate that the Kingdom is obtained through renunciation:



- the treasure is that for which it is worth selling everything, staking everything on it. The emphasis of the parable is on the attitude of the man who has grasped the unexpected possibility given to him of discovering in Jesus the nearness of the Kingdom (hence the joy);
- to have the precious pearl is worth giving up being a merchant.

The parable of the net (vv. 47-50) shows how far commitment must go: to the end, to the final discernment. In commitment we must behave as if facing the last judgement. This requires faithfulness in commitment because of the actuality of the judgement.

The coming of Jesus has begun to make discernment operative: little by little the righteous and the wicked are revealed to themselves. It is urgent to take the Kingdom seriously, on pain of being excluded from it.

Jesus demands an uncompromising response because the Kingdom of God is proclaimed by Jesus as the supreme and exclusive good, which gives fullness of joy. Therefore, participation in the Kingdom of God requires a conversion of the heart (Mt 4:17), which is only possible if God is effectively perceived as the only truly absolute reality of life, the only reality that, in the face of the precariousness of all human things (material goods, social prestige, affections, projects, etc.), remains eternal and that in another form restores to us all those authentically human things from which, for the sake of the Kingdom, we have also detached ourselves. Thus the conversion of heart and the detachment from human things that follows are a profession of faith in the eternity of God and His personal love for each of us. Creatures are given the value they have in relation to God and not in relation to our interests.

Prayer:

- Consider what absolute value I accord to the Kingdom of Heaven that is coming to me now;
- consider that the Kingdom requires of me a radical response that includes the renunciation of everything;
- consider how I would behave if I were at the point of death or how I would behave if I were facing judgement.

## 5. The Kingdom of God as the source of our hope

The Kingdom is already present in us now, in proportion to our more or less generous and decisive response to the Lord's call to share in his goods, but it will be established in its fullness at the end of time, and then it will be realised and manifested totally in us, as individuals and as a community of the saved (Rev 21:1-8.22-27; 22:1-5.16-17.20). The final invocation "Come, Lord Jesus" expresses the yearning present in every human heart, in our heart, which we must fulfil.

When every day in our Father we say "Thy Kingdom come":

- we express our faith and our hope in God as Lord of our life and of human history;
- we profess the absoluteness of the Kingdom, before which everything must be relativized;
- we proclaim our desire and our commitment to convert our hearts in love to the Kingdom.