

# *The Kingdom of God*

The Second Sunday After Pentecost 2009

by the Rev. Mary Haas

When we hear the term 'Kingdom of God' we often think only of heaven. However, in a concordance I have the term 'kingdom of God' is said to mean the reign of God. Barkley says the reign of God is when God's will is done as perfectly on earth as it is in heaven.

We know God's will is a long way from perfect as yet, here on earth and we know why. God gave us free will free to make mistakes free to choose how we wished to act. Because God gave us free choice to believe, what we wish to believe, to do what we wish to do we make mistakes.

God not only gave us the right to make up our own mind as to what we do but He also gave us the proper pathway to follow. Because we often do not listen we make mistakes big time.

God tells us to love our neighbors as our selves. Do we? Not in a way you would notice.

There have been wars and rumors of wars ever since I can remember and that is a fair amount of time. Is that showing love for ones neighbor? Again not so.

Let us look at countries in many countries in the world the ruling class is anything but kind and loving to the average citizen. It doesn't take too much thought to name several countries where starvation and/or incarceration or even a sentence of death without a proper trial is the rule rather than the exception. Does that sound as if mankind loves each other? Not the way I look at it doesn't.

If you narrow the neighborhood down to towns and cities instead of entire countries you might think people would find a way to love each other living so close together. If love means wishing your neighbor no harm, and caring enough to see that no one goes without the necessities of life it simply doesn't happen. Every city every town has people in need who for whatever reason do not get it.

Just because you live in a town does not mean everyone gets along. Some things that happen can really make you wonder what in this world motivates people. to complain about their neighbor. A couple of days ago there was a story on the

morning news about a minister who was arrested for disturbing the peace in the neighbor where his church was located.

His offence was that he rang the church bells. You immediately think maybe he rang them extra early or maybe they were extra loud. Neither was the case, an announcer said it was after 9 o'clock when the bells were rung, well within the time noise could be made legally. As to how loud they were there was an ice cream truck ringing a bell in the same area at the same time. The bell from the ice cream truck proved to emit more decibels than the church bells no one complained about it.

The minister's sentence was suspended, but if the bells are rung again no matter by whom, he will have to do his ten days in jail.

Does this sound either fair or loving?

Even in families and churches places where love should be most prevalent it is not. we would have to be totally blind not to know how often family members hurt each other so badly they break apart, or how often in a church denomination or even in one individual parish causes a split. Remember when the prayer book changed not in meaning, but the wording was different and caused a huge split.

If in places like churches and families, where love should be most certainly present and practiced, we cannot seem to do it how in the world do we think we will ever be able to have God's love and will prevail here on earth.

It wouldn't be able to happen if it were up to us we need to thank God that the time the kingdom will come is up to God and in God's own time it will come. Yet God wants us to help.

We have heard of many bad things that have happened in the world over the years but as with most things there is another side of the story.

The behavior in the world today is a far cry from the perfect will of God but it is decidedly better than it was in the beginning of the Christian era.

Even though wars continue and families and churches don't always react in loving ways there are many ways that we, the human race have improved.

At least in many places if not all we no longer throw our insane into places where they are housed, without clothes. with very little food, often not fit to eat,

and no medical care.

Today we recognize insanity as a disease and give those who suffer from it medical care, we try to make sure they are comfortable, and fed and clothed and sometimes cured. A vast difference from before.

Children too are cared for differently they are no longer simply ignored if they lose their parents to death, or if they are noticed put in an orphanage that is little more than a house of horrors.

Today we use foster homes not perfect but far better than before.

Even churches have improved in the way they treat other religions or denominations.

My husband tells a story of when he was growing up, in a good practicing catholic home. the priest told the young people when they passed a protestant church to run not walk for they might be pulled in and kept. Not so today. We might even do some things together.

Many of us remember when many churches referred to Jews as Christ killers. I've often wondered where they thought that left Jesus for He was after all a Jew Not only that but I don't remember any place where Jesus says to love only those whom you liked or whom you agreed with.

Nowadays many of the things I have just spoken of are unthinkable at least in most cases. Why? Because God's kingdom really is on the way, however slowly.

Jesus tells us in the very first part of today's gospel that the kingdom of God, to which we all aspire, like someone scattered seeds on the ground then both night and day they would grow even if he didn't know how.

The things you just heard of that show anything but love are in most cases no more, and the fact that they are no more shows growth in God's kingdom.

Growth is a very powerful thing nothing can really stop it. A seed falls in the crack of a cement walkway soon the growth of a weed has enlarged the crack.

another seed a tree seed falls in the crack of a large boulder, it sprouts and a tree starts to grow soon the rock splits the power of growth is so strong. it can and does split huge rocks.

You can sit and watch a plant but you do not see it grow you only know it is growing when you compare it to how it was a week ago or perhaps how it was a month ago. God's reign is like growth you do not see it grow even if you watched both night and day. Yet, when you compare the world of a thousand years ago to the world of a hundred years ago and then to the world of today you will see the growth, you will see how much human kind has improved.

Growth is important and there is more than one kind of growth when we are born our moms very carefully record our growth have their babies gained a pound or grown an inch? Have they leaned to sit or creep?

Then there is another type of growth has my child learned how to treat his playmates? Does he share; has he learned not to bite? This also is growth. How a person treats others is very important.

We may find it impossible to affect how love and caring come to the world at large we can, however grow in the way we take care to make sure we help not hurt our family no matter if it is our biological family or our church family or anyone who is our neighbor.

If we practice our growth in caring and love on those we care most about it will spread and help the coming of the day God's perfect power and will reign.