

Jesu Juva

“Don’t Miss It!”

Text: Luke 17:20-30; Job 14:1-6

Don’t be deceived. When things look normal, when things look ordinary, they may not be.

As we heard, things looked ordinary and normal in the days of Noah. They were *eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage*. In the days of Lot, they were *eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building*. Normal. Ordinary. Until it wasn’t. Until the rain started falling from the sky and welling up from the ground. Until the *fire and sulfur* started raining from heaven.

Why is that? Jesus told us today: the kingdom of God does not come in ways that can be seen. It comes by faith. In fact, when the stuff comes which you *can* see - the flood, the fire and sulfur, and *the lightning that flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other* - it is too late. For when you see those things, it is not the kingdom of God coming, it is judgment. Judgment against sin.

And so, Jesus says, *the kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed*. Because, in fact, the kingdom of God, He says, is already here! It is already *in the midst of you*. So if you’re looking for the big, the fantastic, the spectacular, you’ll miss it. You’ll miss what is right in front of you.

And they did. The Pharisees couldn’t see what was right before their eyes. They couldn’t see that in Jesus, the kingdom of God *had* come to them - not to judge them or condemn them, but to save them.

But Jesus didn’t look the part, if you were looking with your eyes. A baby in a manger. A boy growing up in Nazareth. A man being rejected even in His own hometown. A man dying on a cross. Not the stuff of kingdoms, they thought. Not the stuff of God.

Except it was. And the Word of God had said that it would be; that this is the way the kingdom of God would come. For the kingdom of God is not about power and worldly glory and wealth. It is about the forgiveness of sins, about mercy, about love and grace. And so Jesus would come in exactly that way. He looked normal and quite ordinary. But faith knew He was anything but. Faith could see that the Word of God was being fulfilled. The kingdom of God had come.

And so it is today. *The kingdom of God is still in the midst of you*. And you see it. You see it not with thunder and lightning, but when the Word of God is preached, or spoken in homes or among friends. You see it when not water from the sky but from the font is

poured out with the Word of God and a sinner is baptized, a child of God is born from above. You see it when bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus and what looks like normal, ordinary eating and drinking becomes something quite extraordinary. You see it when instead of yelling, resentment, and hostility, forgiveness is given. In all these ways, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you, for in all these ways, Jesus is in the midst of you, and working in you and through you.

If you're looking for the kingdom with your physical eyes, looking for the big, the fantastic, the spectacular, you'll miss all that; you'll miss Jesus and how He is working in your midst even now. But the eyes of faith see. The eyes of faith see that there's more going on here than meets the eye. Much more. Just as in the manger was much more than a baby, and on the cross was much more than a man. Namely, that with His life, death, and resurrection, the kingdom of God had come for all people.

And especially for those in desperate situations, like Job. *Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble*, Job lamented. And maybe you feel a bit that way, your days filled with troubles, pains, problems, and struggles. And if the kingdom of God is the big, the fantastic, the spectacular, then a life that is not is . . . what? Cursed by God? Rejected by God? Punished by God?

But it is not so. Such a life - Jesus' life of troubles, pains, problems, and the cross - is exactly how the kingdom of God came. And if that's what your life looks and feels like, it is not a sign of rejection by God - faith clings to the Word of God and His promises. That even in such times, the kingdom of God is in your midst. That even in such times, the Word and forgiveness of God is there for you. Jesus is there for you. For He went through it all - and more - and has promised to be with you now. To be your strength when you are weak, to be your hope when you despair, and to be your life in death.

And so in the Lord's Prayer we pray: *Thy kingdom come*. And we don't ask *when*, like the Pharisees did. The end will come when the time set by the Father arrives. That's going to happen whether we pray the Lord's Prayer or not. And when that time comes, it will be big, it will be spectacular . . . and it will be too late.

So we pray, *Thy kingdom come*, and ask that it come to us now, while it is not too late. That His forgiveness come now, His mercy come now, His Word come now, His Spirit come now; that Jesus come now. Come flood my life with His love and rain down from heaven His mercy and forgiveness. That may not look like much, but it is exactly what you and I need.

So maybe it's time to take another look at your life. It may be *few of days and full of trouble*, it may look ordinary and normal, but in reality it is anything but. For the kingdom of God has come to you, and through you it comes to others. And those around you, they need it. They need the kingdom of God. No matter who they are - unbelievers,

great sinners, family, friends, even pastors. To hear a word of forgiveness, the embrace of God's love, His Word of promise, in the midst of a world of ever increasing opposition, hate, and fear . . . yeah, we need that. And in such a world, such things are no longer ordinary and normal. They are the kingdom of God coming - to you, to your home, to a broken and hurting world. They are Jesus, in the midst of us, where He has promised to be.

Until we are in the midst of Him, with the angels and archangels and the great cloud of witnesses and saints around His throne. That's when we'll see. And it will be bigger, and more spectacular and fantastic than any of us could ever imagine. Not a new kingdom - the same kingdom that is here hidden, but will then be revealed. And we'll finally see how it really was here, all along.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.