

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

There's No Time Like Forever

Gospel Lesson

Revelation 11:15-19 (NRSV)

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

“The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord
and of his Messiah,
and he will reign forever and ever.”

¹⁶ Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ singing,

“We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty,
who are and who were,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.

¹⁸ The nations raged,
but your wrath has come,
and the time for judging the dead,
for rewarding your servants, the prophets
and saints and all who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

¹⁹ Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Bible/Sermon Focus

The book of Revelation has been bent, twisted, turned and used; it has been misunderstood and often feared; it has stumped many, many a Christian. The political tension of the era in which it was written, the coded nature of its language, and its violent images should, for many reasons, make us feel a bit confused.

But, in its time (and even now) the book was meant to bring hope. The book expresses that even as evil and the kingdoms of this world espouse their violence and domination, that, in the words of Nadia Bolz-Weber, “dominant powers are not ultimate powers.” In the midst of evil actions and difficulties, God remains present, here and now. And, God promises us a future reign of completion and fullness.

This week’s sermon used the strange relationship we have with time during this season of weirdness, to explain the “already, but not yet” kind of experience we may have with the Kingdom of God.

We also reflected on the fact that many people in this world, especially in the global south, do not often have the luxury of living outside of the present moment. "Planning for the future is a position of privilege" is how Pastor Andy said this. Time is indeed strange. Time, for Christians, is even more strange, because we are under the radical notion that God is in fact fully here, and also, not quite yet here.

There are theological scholars who bump concepts about time, found in physics, against theological ideas. In each and every generation, Christians have wondered about this "already and not yet-ness" of our relationship with the Kingdom of God. The season of weirdness has provided us yet another one of these opportunities in our generation, in our place and time.

Discussion Questions

1. In this season of weirdness, we have been forced to live in the present moment. When has this happened to you at another time in your life? What was that like?
2. The Kingdom of God is in "the transcendent present" - It is both here and not here; beyond and available. How would you explain this in your own words?
3. It is through us that God's Kingdom comes to be, in our actions, our words, our relationships. Where do you struggle to help "Thy Kingdom Come?"
4. Do you believe that God's work is "actualized by means of human agents?" Why or why not? How so?
5. How do we make God's timeless work real in this temporal world?
6. What are your feelings about the Book of Revelation?

Prayer

God of eternity, we praise you above the heavens. We praise you here and now. We praise you forever. Let our lives be a reflection of your work in this world. Let us be instruments of your Kingdom come. Thank you for this time to reflect of your Kingdom. Amen.

When we pray "Thy Kingdom Come" we are tapping into that which is beyond us. AND - When we pray "Thy Kingdom Come" we are asking for a real, tangible change to the way things are in the world.