

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD – LIKE A PEARL OF GREAT VALUE

**Nic Denny-Dimitriou - 24th July 2005**

### **Matthew 13: 44 - 52**

My focus today:

The Gospel passage with Jesus' three short parables about the Kingdom of God.

Sign over a church door:      “All ye who enter here, enter the Kingdom of God.”

Notice stuck on the door:      *“This door is closed due to the draught – please use  
the side door.”*

Many women and men in this community are business and professional people, some now retired, most still active in varying ways. We go to great lengths in pursuit of our careers, and to further specific goals in our lives. We spend thousands of rands on computers, courses, professional premises, on degrees and further education, on literature and other means of ensuring that we are “on top of the job”. This applies equally to the person in a corporate environment, and the person running their own business, large or small, hi-tech or not. It is a tough world out there!

Women – often professionals AND mothers these days, show incredible flexibility and multi-tasking skills – as I am frequently reminded! Bumper stickers that once were fashionable include these two:

“Mom’s Taxi” and

“If women’s place is in the home, how come I’m always in the car?”

Many in this community are sport and leisure enthusiasts. Cycle / golf / canoeing / homes elsewhere for leisure / mountain climbers / follow every rugby game and talk enthusiastically about the latest exploits of the Sharks or Springboks; many enter sports events – even several former and current Comrades runners, and some who have won national & international championships – canoeing being one example in this parish. Whether pursuing honours in a sport or leisure pastime, or simply doing it for the pleasure, great effort is often put into practicing the sport or hobby, keeping fit, perfecting technique – or just many hours enjoying the game! Not a lot of effort spared.

Great efforts are made in respect of our homes.

Great efforts are made in respect of retirement. Planning for it. Anticipating it. And for those already living in it – including living arrangements, medical care, looking especially carefully after financial resources.

In regard to children – nothing spared! Education especially, with deliberations on choice of school, finding necessary fees, money for extras, meetings etc.

We teach them skills and etiquette – and how to take their place in the world – anywhere in the world, for that matter!

ALL of these things are necessary aspects to living. (We may go overboard, or so focus on them to the detriment of other things, but...) They are good and necessary, in and of themselves – there is no implicit criticism of attending to the practical and important requirements of daily living.

YET:

So often, little effort is spared for the Kingdom of God (KOG), “the world to come”, expressed here and now in part. Whilst I do not suggest this of us, someone has said that many in the Christian community sometimes live as if there is no KOG in our midst, only busy lives to get on with now, with perhaps a polite nod in the direction of God as a sort-of insurance that we don’t get taken out by a lightning bolt on the golf course or by a truck on the highway.

In our understanding of God, we acknowledge God is everywhere. Re my opening story of the sign above a church door – actually, I doubt it is theologically correct...

The Church building is NOT the Kingdom of God, although a place where the people of God gather and worship can certainly be said to represent the KOG and its values. The people who gather there certainly could be said to be part of the KOG.

The KOG is wider than the institutions of the church, although they are included in it. It is made up of sinful people who are imperfect and err, which sometimes will be mirrored in the ways and structures of the institution of the church.

But it is the primary means God has given for the world to hear about, to know and to experience what it is to be part of God’s Kingdom.

So what else can we say about the KOG?

- ✓ It is that place where the values of God are enshrined, lived out, established in people’s lives and within a community.
- ✓ Not specifically a physical place although it can include physical places
  - (move away from using the term “place”...)
  - A state of being, where a person is “at one” with God

The KOG exists when and where the love of God is acknowledged, the rule and authority of the Creator of all things is acknowledged, where the intentions of God are lived out – the intentions of God as best we can know and discern them, expressed through the teachings of the prophets, the apostles and essentially through the person of Jesus

himself, recorded in the Scriptures and handed on to successive generations. The KOG can be said to exist when Jesus is acknowledged to be Lord, and a person thus lives in consequence of that.

Jesus' parables heard this morning form part of his instruction on the nature of God's Kingdom. Out of many things said by him on the subject, the Gospel reading this morning gives us these 3 analogies of Jesus.

- ✓ Field with great treasure. Sells all, for it is worth everything!
- ✓ Pearl of immense value. Sells all, for it is worth everything!
- ✓ Net in the sea bringing in fish of all kinds – with an implied judging – a keeping of “good fish” and throwing away of “bad fish” just like a fisherman does from his large catch.

What is particularly striking there?

For me – the value of it. Of such overwhelming, immense importance / value, that it is worth everything one has.

The KOG is like... (said Jesus)

Not a little extra – like a choice of sauce over a steak or flavour if ice-cream over a dessert. It IS the meal, in its entirety!

We live in a time of great comfort, therefore sometimes also of great complacency towards the things of God. Indifference, generally, in our society. Times of competition, of pressures and stress (in the midst of all our comfort).

Danger is that we fail to regard the KOG as of such overriding value, because we are constantly presented with other things and ideals that claim that same value, an overriding value in our lives. Useful to be reminded of these things, from today's gospel reading. We all need to sort that one out for ourselves!

Vision:

Next Sunday... presentation

What we want to continue to be and what we want to give new emphasis to.

Essentially, that this will be a vibrant community of God's people, one that draws people into friendship with God (into the KOG), and sustains us in that.

- ✓ Not a place for self-righteousness, even though the Christian community can sometimes be good at that
- ✓ Not synonymous with the church. Church doesn't always get it right.

✓ Bad examples – put people off. Poor role models.

We need to be mindful, too, of the judgement of God, especially on “the household of faith” for how we handle what we have received from the Lord.

As part of the wider church of God in the world, as part of God’s Kingdom, we want to expend at least the same effort into the KOG as we so readily expend on all other areas of our lives.

And we want this place to be one where the KOG is seen and experienced as a pearl of immense value, a treasure.

Let us pray...