

The good news for us today comes in the form of an invitation and a promise. “Do not be afraid”, says Jesus, “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”.

The kingdom of God is that new reality that is breaking into and transforming the world as we know it.

The kingdom of God is what we see embodied in Jesus, in all his acts of:

love,
forgiveness,
healing,
restoration

We understand that the fullness of the kingdom is a future reality, but we also understand that the kingdom is, in fact, already here.

It has been made known to us in Jesus.

And we continue to live into that kingdom when, by the power of God’s Spirit, we continue to participate in acts of love and service, forgiveness, and healing and restoration.

And this reality, the promise of the “presentness” of God,
the promise that God is active within and between us *right now*,
is an invitation to us to live differently,
to live not with fear or anxiety, but with confidence and trust in
God’s promise.

“Do not be afraid”, says Jesus,
Immediately after which he says,
“Sell your possessions and give alms”

And on the face of it, those might feel like two different propositions,
two different actions, if you like.

In fact, it may even seem as though those statements are at odds with one another!

I think many of us can handle giving alms,
giving from the resources we have available to us to help others who are in
need,

but it might seem that selling all of our possessions would engender the
very state of fear that Jesus is comforting us against!

But those two statements actually go together.

But Jesus' invitation to divest ourselves of our material comforts is actually an invitation to divest ourselves of our fear and to give up our tendency to believe our ultimate security lies in our capacity to accumulate money and possessions.

Our money and our possessions will not and cannot save us.

They may afford us some comfort, but the security they offer is ultimately illusory.

We cannot find meaning or love or comfort in our material possessions.

We cannot achieve peace through the accumulation of assets.

The peace and the meaning that we so yearn for,

the peace and the meaning that comes from knowing that we are truly known and truly loved,

the peace and the meaning that comes from knowing that our true identity lies in the fact that we are the beloved children of God...

...that stuff can only come from God.

That stuff is only God's to give and it is given freely to us.

There is no doubt that having money in the bank, a roof over our heads and food on the table helps,

but all of that can be taken away.

While those things may appear tangible, concrete, substantial and real, they are ultimately less enduring, less permanent, less *real*, than the constant, steadfast, utterly unshakeable love that God has for us.

So, "do not be afraid", says Jesus because God has *got you*.

There is a further invitation, though, in Jesus' words this morning, and that is to live always in the light of that truth,

to be deliberately and constantly awake and alive to the truth that we are held within the love of God.

"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit," says Jesus.

"Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks".

Jesus is urging upon us a state of readiness, and this state of readiness is ultimately all about living in the recognition that we exist always in relationship with God and that every moment carries the potential to reveal God's presence.

Every moment carries the potential to reveal the kingdom of God.

Every moment is an opportunity to experience God at work within us and within the world.

And one of the ways we live in this state of readiness is through prayer.

The apostle Paul told the early church in Thessalonica to “pray without ceasing”, to “rejoice always” and “to give thanks in all circumstances”.

Prayer is the practice of placing ourselves in the presence of God.

It is the practice of consciously holding the fulness of our lives –
all our joys and thanksgivings,
all our wonderings and concerns,
all our happiness and anger,
our confusion and anxiety,
our concerns for ourselves for others, and for the world –
holding all those things in the presence God.

And we do this because God is the ultimate reality,
the source of all life and goodness,
the one in whom we live and move and have our being,
beyond whom there is no greater power.

We bring our lives into God’s presence in prayer because there is no one else to call upon who has the power to save us!

God holds and sustains the very fabric of reality.

All things are held together in God.

And prayer is the recognition of that truth.

So we pray in order that we might be drawn more fully into the truth of our existence,
in order that we might perceive and be a part of God’s activity in the world,
in order that we might be servants of the truth of God’s love for the world.

Prayer is the true vocation of the people of God.

Prayer is the state of readiness through which we able to perceive and receive the reality of God.

It is God’s gift to us for that purpose.

Thanks be to God.