

# The Kingdom of God

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## Part 3

*"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: Where there is hatred, let me sow Love; where there is injury, Pardon; where there is doubt, Faith; where there is despair, Hope; where there is darkness, Light; where there is sadness, Joy. (St. Francis Xavier, SJ)*

### **God's ultimate will for this world is His Kingdom**

A reading of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Synoptics, reveals that God's ultimate will for this world is His Kingdom. The Kingdom and its nearness centrally shaped both the exteriority and interiority of Jesus. It is what led Him to His historical

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destiny, that of the Cross, but also to His Resurrection. A resurrection that is God's response to one who, for the service of His reign, was put to death by the anti-reign. In other words, to death, *God brings Life*. This dynamic teaches us to be aware of the reciprocity between knowing Jesus and knowing His Cause; not only to proclaim but to *establish* the Kingdom of God. At first glance, Jesus seems to be in continuity with the earlier mediators of the Kingdom, Moses and the prophets, who also happened to be "types" of Jesus Christ. Jesus displays honesty toward the truth, mercy toward the suffering of others, justice toward the oppression of the people, loving devotion to His mission, total fidelity to God the Father, indestructible hope, and the sacrifice of His life. Jesus appears to be in relationship with a God who has a specific substance - a positive one for human beings, with the qualities of mercy, justice, partiality to the poor, the weak and children, and a God who elicits honesty, trust, hope, freedom and joy. Therefore, Jesus shows a comportment of denouncing and exposing lies and deceptions, honoring the truth. And mercy and availability in serving the people around Him. How this attitude contrasts with our choices in life! Do we care about the inconvenient truth? Do we honor it? Are we even open to accepting reality as it is and not as we would like it to be? Is mercy our primary reaction before weakness? Is fidelity a defining characteristic of our love for Christ? Do we channel this fidelity to Christ through solidarity? Solidarity understood as the fundamental recognition that each human being is made for others and desires to be with others? Do we care for the truth and for those around us beyond, in spite of, and preferably before our own personal interests and preferences?

*"Remember that when you leave this earth, you will not be able to take with you what you have received, but only what you have given: A full heart, enriched by sincere service, love, sacrifice and courage" (St. Francis Xavier, SJ)*

Following Jesus is the maximum expression of Faith in HIM as Christ. When one tries to reproduce the following of Jesus in one's private and public life, the reign of God reappears in a central way, no matter what the circumstances of one's life. In the first phase of Jesus' public life, following Jesus meant proclaiming and positing visible signs of the Kingdom, while in the second phase of His public life, following Jesus meant steadfastness in the face of the powerful reaction of the anti-reign (the reign of the anti-God). Following Jesus has an essential relationship with the establishment of the Kingdom of God and the destruction of the anti-reign.

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Are we up to it? Or do we leave, disengage and ignore those around us who are reduced by their circumstances and choices to lack of honor, good health and wealth, usually mocked by the lovers of this world? Do we understand that only in following Jesus do we become more like Him and less like ourselves? Do we accept that following Jesus means doing what He did and how He did it? That it means personally assuming the mission of building the Kingdom with the attitude and spirit of Jesus *right now*, in the midst of our circumstances, without delay? Do we realize that the sacraments are the channels of Grace provided by Jesus for us to receive the necessary strength to save our souls WHILE we are building His Kingdom on Earth? Or, on the contrary, do we treat them in a ritualistic manner of worship, like a pagan with an idol, not expecting transformation, hoping not to be disturbed? If the ultimate finality of all Christian activity is the maximum building up of the Kingdom of God, do we acknowledge that we must place ourselves in opposition to the oppression that the anti-kingdom brings spiritually and materially into society? Jesus came into this world not only to be known and worshiped, but as one who sends, who commands, and whose mission *must* be implemented. Christ is our Savior because He has already brought about historical salvation. He was sent by the Father in total gratuitousness in exchange for us to be sent by Him to continue His mission.

### **What does it look like to pursue the mission, the cause of Jesus?**

The proclamation of the Kingdom of God brings liberation first from the slavery of sin and second from the structures, whether political, historical, and/or sociological, that perpetuate sin in our lives and communities. This assertion must be properly and accurately understood in order to be effective. It means that the liberation brought by the proclamation of the Kingdom of God divides the field into two camps: Those whom we could call sinners out of weakness, whom Jesus welcomes and pardons cordially and affectionately, expecting a transformation of their lives, as in the case of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:11). And on the other hand, those who are also sinners, but who instead inflict oppression on others. To this second camp, Jesus proclaims the Good News of the Gospel, but in the form of a demand for radical conversion, as in the case of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9).

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Following Jesus, with the spirit of Jesus, means living and practicing the Beatitudes freely and intentionally, living in gratitude and in a permanent act of thanksgiving, empowered by the truth of Jesus' Resurrection and free and available to do the Will of God in the midst of the temptations of the devil, the spirit of the world and the flesh. This produces inner JOY. The joy of finding the *pearl of great price*, the hidden treasure for which one sells everything else. This joy is living for others and receiving from others. It is being able to be with others, being able to celebrate Life, right now, and being able to proclaim God, Our Father.

In summary, following Jesus *with* the spirit of Jesus produces indestructible Hope, true Freedom and inner Joy. Jesus has placed in our hands the choice to follow Him and make history with our lives.

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*Ad majorem Dei gloriam*



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