

Column

During the winter months when the leaves are off the trees, God's grandeur in nature is put on display almost daily at my house. As the sun edges upward, from the vantage point of my sunroom and deck, I see shafts of light in many different hues of orange and yellow reflecting off the water of Lake Blue Ridge. The trees appear to be on fire. All nature sings!

I have been tempted to take a picture, but no camera lens is wide enough to capture the entire expanse of what I am describing. One would have to take a number of shots and paste them together.

Something similar could be said of the Kingdom of God of which Jesus speaks in the Gospels. (Matthew has it "Kingdom of Heaven", but the concept is the same.) This Kingdom is so vast that no single snapshot suffices to picture it fully. Thus, Jesus tells a number of stories or parables to reveal its glory and grandeur . . . and that to those whose eyes are opened spiritually.

There are at least 12 kingdom parables in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). Some of the more familiar include: the workers in the vineyard, the talents, the great banquet, the seed and the sower and the pearl of great price. All are intended to describe various aspects of the God's sovereign rule breaking into this realm of time and space. Included in this cataclysmic event are the defeat of sin, Satan and death along with the arrival of a renewed and restored world (Revelation 21:1).

This event had been foreseen by such prophets as Ezekiel in the Old Testament. In chapter 34 of the book that bears his name, we find Yahweh soliloquizing: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" The shepherds here are not actual shepherds in the field, but those who have rule over God's covenant people, namely their kings.

God says they have been bad kings. The good news comes later in the chapter when He says that He Himself is coming to be their king. As they have been bad shepherds, He will be a good shepherd. "I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high

mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 34:14). Still further down in this chapter, we learn that God will act in and through a descendant of King David.

In the Gospels, we find Jesus not only announcing the Kingdom but embodying it. He is both Emmanuel (God with us) and the true Davidic King, the Good Shepherd.

Again, His reign is many faceted. No single picture can capture it. It is like the panoramic scene that I see many mornings from my house. It is a many-splendored thing.

God’s reign arrived in Jesus. In the Gospels He is given the title “Christ” which means anointed one or king. We learn that He not only has come, but comes. Thus, Jesus Himself teaches followers to pray: “Thy kingdom come . . . on earth as it is in heaven.”

What should be our response as we wait the full working out of His plan? Might it not be to put this

little bit of earth called 'me' under the sovereign reign of the true King? To say daily: Take my hands, feet and voice and use them as you will?

We beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer)

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