

The Inbreaking

Wayne Waibel – 01/21/2024

And so began the inbreaking. What stands out particularly at the beginning of this Movement is the precedence of the indicative over the imperative. In the course of normal human events – the exact opposite holds true. If you want to be a professional baseball player – you need to practice. You don't get to be a pro and then start your disciplined routine.

But for Jesus the indicative is the emphasis – “The kingdom of God is at hand,” and the imperative becomes subordinate – “repent and believe.” This tells us that this great Movement of divine inbreaking is happening – it would behoove us to repent and believe, but regardless – the kingdom of God is happening.

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The key to faithfulness is responsiveness. When Jonah informs the Ninevites that judgement is pending, their response is so immediate and all-inclusive that it actually succeeds in changing God's mind! Thought does not create action, action creates thought.

When Jesus calls Simon, Andrew, James and John, they don't contemplate – they don't discuss - they don't say a word. They immediately drop what they're doing and follow Him. In the case of James and John they leave their poor old dad in the boat without so much as a "thanks for the memories." Such is the power of faith.

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The Movement which began at Christ's birth – the inbreaking of God – continues unrelenting to this day. Even when we are fearful of the state of the world or the direction it seems to be heading – there are always divine forces at play. Sometimes despite our best efforts to ignore them. It's a good thing the language of faith relies on ambiguity and paradox.

Case in point – already and not yet. Even though his timeline was way off, Paul had the right idea. While he was convinced of Christ's imminent return – like within days or months – he still managed to fully grasp the manner of dwelling in the world as though not in the world.

The coming reign of God is much larger than the trajectory of our own personal lives. God's realm is even now breaking into our world. Two thousand plus years removed from when the Movement began, makes it quite easy for us to understand the "not yet" part of that reign. In fact, it almost clouds us to the "already" part of it.

It has become human nature to lock in on the there and then of this life – rendering the here and now at best, less than significant, but all too often completely obsolete. Perhaps that is why the proclamation from Jesus as prelude to calling His disciples put the precedence on the indicative – “the kingdom of God is at hand.”

The recognition that the structures of this world are passing away changes our relationship to the things of this world, allowing us to live with them as though they are not. That coupled with the fullness of time made present in Jesus Christ gives us pause – and cause to rejoice. Jesus is the presence of the transformative power of God.

When He calls His disciples, He calls them – and us – into a new way of being. It is the difference between discipleship as a task and discipleship as an identity. This inbreaking leads us away from things as they are and toward an abundant life devoted to service. It’s a simple life. Hard – maybe, but simple.

In a broken world fraught with inhumanity, corruption, violence, and turmoil – this community of faith continues to support the Movement of humankind to a more perfect outcome.

We have our hands full, to be sure, but I think we can all breathe a collective sigh of relief in knowing that in America – we still maintain the capacity to at least talk to our enemies. We may lack the depth of Spirit to actually embrace for the moment – that time is not yet, but it will come.

God's satisfaction is in the deepest human yearnings. And what you will always find at that depth is love. The Movement to reconcile the world unto God continues unabated. There is nothing we can or need to do about that, except to acknowledge the inbreaking of His realm.

The reign of God is not the product of discipleship, but the precondition of it. Our Lord teaches us that becoming a faithful Christian disciple takes both a moment and a lifetime. And those capacities lie within each of us. Amen.