

Scripture: Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 13:31-32

Sermon Title: "Thy Kingdom Come"

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Last Sunday, we began taking a Lenten look at the Lord's Prayer, as each week, we look at different pieces of this important prayer on our journey toward Easter. This morning, with our readings calling us to consider what God's kingdom does look like and what God's will for us is, we continue with the second phrase - "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." And so, as we consider that phrase a little bit more this morning, let us again take a moment to simply ponder these words for ourselves, as the choir now sings and continues to build upon this prayer. (PAUSE)

This past Monday, as some of you already know, I had the privilege of taking part in the Community Read Aloud sponsored and coordinated by our local United Way. In honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday, which is March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Community Read Aloud is a day to share the love and importance of reading as we seek to get kids excited about it. It is a day when a couple hundred volunteers read to several thousand midcoast children in elementary schools, child care centers, and Head Starts programs from Brunswick to Waldoboro. And I was excited to be a part of this and to have the opportunity to read to two classrooms in Richmond and two classrooms right here in Wiscasset. Yet, with that excitement, came some nerves as I tried to figure out what the right book to take would be. I had one in mind, a personal favorite entitled "The Three Questions" which has a wonderful moral message to it and it's one that I have even read to high schoolers at Pilgrim Lodge, but would it be engaging enough, entertaining enough - part of me wanted a silly book to make the kids smile and that book certainly isn't silly - it really makes you think. I just wasn't sure what to read.

So I took a couple hours one afternoon to go chat with our local librarians across the street to get some ideas. And they were amazing - we were down in the Children's room and we must have pulled 20 or 25 books to consider which were now covering a tabletop. And after looking at them, I picked up a few that I thought might work, along

with the library's copy of "The Three Questions", and I left with them still pondering which ones to read, and I also left with a bit of advice from Laurie, the Children's Librarian – a simple yet important piece of advice - "don't read a book to kids if you don't like it". In other words, don't read a book just because you think it's what they want to hear, or because you just want to make them laugh. If you don't like the book, they will know, kids are so perceptive in that way, and it just won't go over well. So read a book that you enjoy, that you cherish, and share from something that has meaning to you because if they know you like it, you will share it with conviction and joy and they will listen. So I read them "The Three Questions", a book that teaches the importance of now, not living in the past or getting lost in the future but doing what needs to be done now. It teaches the importance of caring for our neighbors – a term which broadly means those who are around us. And it teaches that the most important thing to do is to do good toward the people around us. In so many ways, while the book doesn't use this language, this book teaches a little bit about what the kingdom of God should look like and I think that's why it is a favorite of mine.

This morning, as we think about the prayer for God's kingdom to come and for God's will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven, it naturally brings up the question of what does this look like? What are we looking for – what are we pray will come about? As Oscar shared with us this morning, we have heard from two readings today – the first from Micah Chapter 6 which teaches that the will of God is not right worship or right sacrifice, but right action as we do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God – words which have been a guiding force of many moral movements in our world today and in recent history. Our second reading has an illustration about the kingdom of God. From the Gospel of Matthew, in a chapter that is filled with metaphors of God's kingdom, we hear that it is like a mustard seed – the tiniest of seeds which becomes a great shrub that provides a safe place in which birds can rest and live. Notice that the kingdom of God is not likened to the shrub that provides a safe place for creation, but rather the kingdom of God is like the seed – a small seed that

becomes something grand. This is a reminder that this kingdom that we long for is not a magic transformation of the world around us, it is sowing and growing. It's not about a surface-level change but a change that has roots in our being, in our world. In this way, when we pray for God's kingdom to come, it is a prayer for these seeds to come, to enter our world, to enter our minds and our hearts, and for them to take root and to grow in ways that produce the fruits of God's kingdom, that show the results we may associate with God's will being done. With the kingdom being the seed that starts from within our being, from within our society, from within our churches, that takes root and begins to grow. And as long as we, with the help of God, nourish the seed, take care of it and are willing to support what grows, the kingdom of God has come and continues to do so with every new seed planted.

You know, when I think back on the Community Read Aloud and my opportunity to read to the 50 or so kids that I got to meet on Monday and to share with them a book that teaches a good moral lesson, I pray that the seeds planted in the reading, along with seeds planted throughout their lives, may bring about lives of care and compassion. Lives that, as they grow physically, emotionally, and spiritually, will grow too with a broadening ability to impact others, to care for others and that, in their living, they may be a transforming force for good in our world, a hope and prayer that we carry for each person in our lives and our community. That is kingdom work. And so when we pray for God's kingdom to come and will be done, may we be ready to share and nurture the seeds, including those in our own lives, where fruits of the kingdom need to grow so that our world can look more like the image put forth in Micah – a just world, a kind world, and humble world as we journey with God.

Beloved People of God, spring may not officially be here but we have planting and cultivating to do nonetheless – a task in the Christian faith that is not governed by the seasons but by the call of being Christ's disciples. And as we do it, may we believe that change is possible, that the fruits of God's kingdom are indeed attainable, that the world can be more just and kind – after all, if we don't believe it, those with whom we

share seeds will know and it won't go well - we must believe that the growth of God's kingdom is indeed possible and if we believe it, that energy will spread. So what kingdom seeds do we need to come forth this day? Do we need seeds that will grow within ourselves, within others, within our community, and within our church a vision or faith in the possibilities, seeds that will grow into goodness, seeds that will produce kindness, seeds that will create safe and nurturing spaces and places, or seeds that create a humble walk as we follow our God? All are needed for the goodness of God's kingdom to come into fuller fruition - a reality for which we pray and for which we live. So be it and may it be so. Amen.