



**Proclaiming the Kingdom
A Lenten Message from
Rev. Randy Cross, Superintendent
Prairie Hills District
Dakotas Conference
of the
United Methodist Church**

Hello Friends,

It's here, in our reading for this week, that we are invited to ponder the Kingdom of God. So, what is this "kingdom?" As Adam Hamilton states, the phrase, "Kingdom of God" occurs more than 100 times in the Gospels, more than most other important parts of our faith, such as sin, or forgiveness, or even love and holiness. It must be important!

Instead of the word "Kingdom," how about "the reign of God" – or the "rule of God" –, which is the actual authority that rests with our Creator to be in charge of all that exists. This is God's reign, where all creatures (including you and me) come under the loving, holy leadership and direction of God. Listen again to Handel's Messiah, and the Hallelujah Chorus which completes the section celebrating Easter and Christ's resurrection and the coming in full of that glorious

reign of God "The kingdom of this world IS become, has become, is now different than it ever has been before! No longer are we under the rule or authority of any human leader, any king or queen, any president or dictator! No – that "kingdom" is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and HE shall reign forever!

In a sense we open the windows and doors of our own existence in celebration of God's rule when we finally recognize and seek to live more fully under that rule – that reign of God.

The Kingdom of God also means the "realm of God" – and what once appeared to be the realm of human rulers, we now understand to be the realm of God's power and authority – all of those political boundaries with passports and border guards sort of go away when we recognize how temporary and imperfect they are, when we see this entire world as one complete and sure realm under God's care.

Rev. Hamilton says three things about the Reign, or Kingdom of God. One, it is a present reality! God today rules this earth, and give us the cherished responsibility to offer ourselves more and more completely in allegiance to that reign, and to invite all others that we know to come under that loving and life-giving rule of the One who created us. The kingdom is today – right now!

The Kingdom of God is also what we hope the future will be. God is ruling the world today, but we know that sin, and evil and self-centeredness and greed and all of those other parts of our human nature still run rampant and bring pain and death and sadness and harm to our world. But we are given the privilege to

look carefully at our world, and identify those places and relationships where we experience the ideal and beautiful reign of God fully being lived out. We are called to look with eyes of faith, and to see as clearly as we can where the Holy Spirit is moving, and Hope is fulfilled and Love is supreme. It happens everyday – and in all places in this world – the ideal and perfect Love of God lived out in the hearts and lives of God’s sons and daughters. We assume our place in God’s reign when we assume the courage to share what we see of God’s power, instead of participating in the gloomy, pessimistic and morbid chasing after tragedies and horrors that are produced in our world daily. We are called to celebrate those places where the world is how God has intended it to be, instead of wallowing in what appears to be a worldwide car crash, or school shooting. It’s not that we live a Pollyannaish kind of life, unwilling to bring change and to work for justice and peace and healing – but Friends, we must give up the habit of racing from one horrible thing to another saying to “Look at that! Look how terrible that is!” We have more important things to do – we have kingdom work to be about as God’s children!

Finally, Adam Hamilton says that the Kingdom of God is something yet to be. We are on a journey of faith, and a journey of transformation into living holy and holy loving lives, and so is our world. When we pray, “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we claim a future reality, even as God’s present Love and power is among us and transforming us and the world today.

And you know, we are transformed when we place ourselves under the discipline of living Christ like lives, of living Kingdom Lives ourselves. We come to

understand the beautiful call on each of us to live humbly, to live justly, to live in forgiveness and forgiving, to live sacrificing what I have and who I am so that others might know the joy of Christ’s love for them as well. When we live as disciples of Jesus Christ ourselves, when we give ourselves away, we then are blessed to truly discover ourselves in God’s Kingdom work, both today and for all eternity. That, friends – is joy.



God bless you this week, and throughout your Lenten journey. May God’s Kingdom come this day in your life. Amen.