



Barbers Do Exist!

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

January 22, 2017

Church of the Holy Angels

1. Today's Gospel is about the Kingdom of God
 - it's not only the center of the Gospel, it's the heart of our faith
 - Jesus tells his disciples today, "repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand"
 - but what do we mean when we talk about God's kingdom?
 - we get a glimpse of it in the reading from Isaiah
 - *"the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom, a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy."*

2. But, for us, the answer is found even closer – in something we say daily . . .
 - in the Lord's prayer
 - we pray, *"thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*
 - when God's kingdom is fully established, the world will be the way God wants it to be
 - there won't be any more poverty, or war, or division, or hatred, or injustice, or corruption, or violence
 - people will learn to live in peace – with abundance, and blessing and goodness, with love and kindness, harmony and justice
 - and we, the people of God, are called to build it

3. So, how are we doing?
 - for all the good actions and works performed by Christians throughout the world, are we closer to the kingdom today than we were in the time of Jesus?
 - are we closer than we were last year or last century?
 - when we ask this question, the results are mixed
 - we can point to progress – where justice is growing and peace is established
 - yet, at the same time, we can point to fear and war and violence and terror and corruption

4. Like the disciples, we have been called into the world to be the instruments of Jesus
 - to be the bearers of Good News
 - and our task is probably more difficult than at any time before
 - when so many people can't hope, can't dream, can't see beyond themselves, their pain, their suffering, their issues and concerns
 - when the world is self-absorbed and consumerism creates chasms between the haves and the have nots, it can be difficult to believe

5. But, you and I, are kingdom bearers – called to make a difference – one person, one good deed, one kindness at a time
 - we chip away at it – Sunday after Sunday – knowing that we are being formed into the people God desires us to be

6. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the disciples, including St. Paul, believed Jesus’ return was soon at hand
 - the kingdom would be established
 - but it didn’t happen, and we still wait
 - early on, when rabbis were asked why God was taking so long to establish the kingdom, the rabbis concluded that God was waiting for a certain response from humanity before sending the Messiah
 - moreover, the rabbis believed that God has a particular number of good works in mind
 - they reminded the people never to underestimate the value of one good work, never Pass by an opportunity for one act of kindness
 - because that single action may be the one that God is waiting for

7. There is a story about a man who went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed
 - as the barber worked, the two had a good conversation
 - they talked about everything – including the subject of God
 - the barber said, “I don’t believe that God exists!”
 - “why do you say that?” asked the customer
 - “well, you just have to go out to the street to realize God doesn’t exist! If God exists, why are there so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there wouldn’t be suffering and pain. I can’t imagine a loving God would allow these things.”
 - the customer didn’t want to get into a fight, so he thanked the man, paid the bill and left
 - but when he walked onto the street he sees a man with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard
 - the customer turned back, entered the barbershop and exclaimed, “Barbers don’t exist!”
 - “How can you say that?” asked the stunned barber
 - “I am here, and I am a barber. And just cut your hair and trimmed your beard!”
 - “No,” the customer said. “Barbers don’t exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, like the man outside.”
 - “Ah, but barbers DO exist! That’s what happens when people don’t come to me.”
 - “Exactly!” affirmed the customer. “That’s the point! God, too, DOES exist! Human suffering and pain is what happen when people don’t come to him.”

8. Maybe if they did, the kingdom of God, would be established on the earth.