
“The kingdom of God is within you”

Luke 17:21

Some of the most nourishing and healing stories that span all cultures are those that speak of wandering souls finding their way home, the hero discovering his true identity, and the royal celebration at finding the kingdom. I begin this article with a pearl from Luke 17:21, “The kingdom of God is within you.” This pearl of great price will be the crux of this entire article and the centerpiece of all of the truths to be discussed here. Indeed, this pearl is full of marvelous truths. Consider—each of us is on the mortal journey, seeking with great diligence to find the kingdom of God, to return home from whence we came. We are as lost strangers, sojourners in the wilderness, “our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out” (Jacob 7:26). But in reality we are not lost. We are not cast out from the kingdom of God. Indeed, as we learn in the Gospel of Luke the kingdom of God is among us, around us and within us. We *are* home, for God is with us, if we but recognize Him in our lives and let the power of His kingdom live through us. When we realize that the kingdom of God is within us, we are then no longer lost, but are found.

What does it require to discover the kingdom of God within us? The fiery spark of the Holy Spirit can awaken our ancient soul to be drawn out to our Everlasting Father and Maker. His love like a royal cloak will gently descend upon us and we will be bound to Him through eternal and unbreakable bonds. He seeks us, ever seeks us, more fervently than we desire to find him or to be found. Sometimes we are so overwhelmed with the feeling that we are lost and so far from home that we fail to see the divine within us, placed there by God like a signet ring that testifies that we truly are members of his royal household. When our souls awaken to these truths, we then recognize ourselves, we know ourselves truly, the hero who has braved the fiery depths to overcome all through faith. We are most real, most alive, most happy and full of joy when we have discovered our true identity. That true hero identity is within us intimately bound up to the kingdom of God within.

The New Testament chapters that are the focus of this article contain numerous stories and parables which all have to do with finding the kingdom of God and the conditions of that kingdom. Let us look in turn at these stories and consider the principles therein which can enlighten our understanding of the kingdom of God and guide us to discover it within ourselves.

Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7)

In this kingdom of God parable one of the main ideas is the great joy that is to be had when the lost soul is found. We may liken this scripture unto ourselves by considering that in our own lives the Lord plays the role of searching for us in the most foreboding wilderness. He will not give up the search until he has found us; and then there will be great rejoicing.

Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

This parable is of the same genre as the *Parable of the Lost Sheep* above. Again, the focus is the great joy that bursts forth when a precious lost treasure is recovered. We also gain insight as to one of the ways that we might discover our true selves and the kingdom of God within us—Repentance!

Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

This parable is somewhat more lengthy and complex but follows the similar pattern of great hero stories. The hero (though admittedly in this case the chief character acts more like swine than a prince of divine origin) leaves from his father’s home, sure of his identity and secure in his inheritance. Yet he enters the great city (or the world) and engages in riotous living. The royal image within him is dimmed and then forgotten. Yet, in the darkest moment the spirit awakens within him the knowledge of the truth, of his true identity and the royal lineage that is his. He begins to recognize the kingdom of God within him and as he embraces that reality he turns and leaves behind the swine and grime of the world. Great rejoicing erupts when he is once again safely home. Like the woman who found the precious treasure, like the man who discovered the beloved sheep wandering in the lone and dreary

wilderness, a celebration of rejoicing is initiated by the father on behalf of the son who has discovered his true identity and returned home.

This truly is a great hero story and a great healing story. We learn that no matter how far we have strayed from home, no matter how dark our forgetfulness of the kingdom that lives within us we can be reclaimed through God's grace and once again be granted the beloved title of son or daughter.

The Duties of Members of the Kingdom (Luke 17:3-10)

Now lest we think that the divine spark which enlightens and enlivens us is a passport to a life without spiritual responsibilities, Jesus shares several short thoughts of wisdom in Luke 17:3-10. These sayings were originally delivered to his disciples to encourage them not to forget their duties to forgive their brethren, an important element of repentance both for the sinner and the afflicted. Jesus underscores the importance of forgiveness by reminding them that they are chosen servants in the kingdom of God and as servants they are expected to obey if they desire the promised blessings. Apparently the disciples needed this encouragement as they plead with the Lord to increase their courage and faith to live as he had taught them.

Healing and Cleansing in the Kingdom of God (Luke 17:11-21)

Next we have a story of ten lepers. Notice that earlier we had a parable of ten precious coins and one was found. The ten lepers story follows a similar format. In many ways, we are like lepers who have been overcome with the diseases of a fallen world. Christ will cleanse us and our faith will make us whole. Yet we can learn from the stranger of this passage, indeed a Samaritan, that we must never forget who has bought us, who has saved us and what price was offered that we might no longer be strangers but fellow citizens in the kingdom of God.

Ever Seeking But Never Coming to a Knowledge of the Truth (Luke 17:20-21)

In this episode the Pharisees come to Jesus seeking sure knowledge of the coming of the kingdom of God. Yet they had failed to recognize, and Christ was quick to point out, that the kingdom would not be revealed as some glorious manifestation but rather was evident in each of those who exercised faith unto repentance, living the lives of committed servants to the Heavenly King. The kingdom was to be found through the quiet introspection of contrition.

The Last Days and the Coming King (Luke 17:22-37)

Turning to his disciples, Christ then instructed them on signs of the times for his expected coming. He had already taught them to find the kingdom of God within, but they had to also understand how to navigate the events that occurred around them, lest they be deceived. Those who have come to fully recognize their true selves through the revelatory power of God's spirit will not be deceived. They will stand in holy places and be gathered in with the saints while the world continues to wallow in darkness and confusion.

God's Own Kingdom

God knows his people. Do we know ourselves? Do we recognize who we are? Have we let the Spirit search our hearts and reveal the stunning truth of our origin and divine possibilities? Or do we presently feel lost? Do we believe in the reality of the at-one-ment, that great power to bring all truth into one great whole uniting and binding the souls of the righteous to God? We can be reclaimed. We can be found. We can be recognized by God and by ourselves, our true selves. Let us open our hearts and discover ourselves as we discover him.