

How does one enter the kingdom of God?

The first thing to realize is: nothing on earth will save you.

Let me repeat that: nothing on earth will save you. If that isn't the most terrifying thing to contemplate, I don't know what is.

Your job won't save you. Your spouse won't fulfill you, no matter how strong your love for each other. The government will fail you (regardless of which party is in power). Capitalism will take advantage of you. Socialism will not care for you. No 'ism' will suffice. No matter how rich you get, you will always want more. Being ruler of all will not be enough. Being the fittest won't guarantee health. Having the grandest of adventures will leave you seeking more. Being the most knowledgeable won't make you wise. Being wise will not free you from despair. Seeking escape in drugs, or alcohol, in endless partying or seeking the next 'high' will just leave you empty, a shell, a nothing - dead in spirit if not in body. No matter what we make in our fruitful endeavours, it will disappear with time or must be repeated. Even the pyramids of Egypt will eventually disappear.

As the book of Ecclesiastes (in the Old Testament) proclaims:

"Futile! Futile!" laments the Teacher. "Absolutely futile! Everything is futile! I reflected on everything that is accomplished by man on earth, and I concluded: Everything he has accomplished is futile—like chasing the wind!"

Nothing of this earth will save you. You must understand this. To enter the kingdom of God, you must truly, deep in your heart, understand that only God will fulfill you.

The second thing to realize is: you are already saved.

Your identity is not your gender, your sex, your ethnicity, your tribe, your intelligence, your job, your family, your country, your body, your accomplishments, your attitude, your thoughts, or what others think of you. Your identity is, simply and profoundly, the Image of God.

We are told this right at the beginning of the Bible:

(Gen 1:27) God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them...

You are Image of God. This means nothing less than God is represented through you. You represent God to the rest of creation, you represent God to other people, and you represent God to yourself. As Image of God, you are part of the Temple of God, the place where God lives: His people, His church: the bride of Christ.

The thing that tears my heart apart is that so many people in this world do not realize that they are Images of God.

It tears God's heart apart too, that many do not realize it. It tore His heart so much that He came incarnate in Jesus the Christ and allowed us to kill Him. Paradoxically, He did not (and does not) react in wrath and justified anger and destroy us (as depicted in the parable of Noah and the flood) but reacted in love and mercy and said: "I forgive you. Come to me, walk with me, live in love - leave this way of death, where nothing can save you."

For the one thing that can save us, the one thing that does save us, is relationship with God Almighty. We get that relationship through Christ. You can only get to know God by meeting God - and sooner or later, everyone, even those who insist on the illusion that the material world is all there is, will meet God - and when they do so, they have met Christ, they have met the Father, they have met the Holy Spirit. We all meet the One who we were designed and created to represent.

When you have relationship with Christ, when you dedicate your life to Him and follow Him, when you talk to Him and walk with Him, you live in His kingdom. And some surprising things start to happen.

You begin to take better care of yourself, for He tells you in your heart: "You are my Image - take care of Yourself as I would wish my representative to be cared for." Take care of your health, take care of your wisdom, take care of how you live, for it all reflects how you represent God Almighty - to yourself, to those around you, and to all of creation.

You begin to care for others, for He tells you in your heart: "You are my Image - care for others as I care for them. Forgive them as I have forgiven you. Take care of your spouse, your family, your friends and those you meet, your community, your government, society at large - not because you will find your fulfilment there, but because you are representing Me to them. Serve them as you would see Me doing so. Just as you ask Me to answer your prayers, I ask you to answer My prayer, to be My representative where I have placed you, in the context you are in. Share my love, my righteousness, my truth. Be one with Me."

It means living with the attitude of "Here's to you - we bless you now in the name of the Lord" (from the song 'Peace to You', sung by Celtic Source). It means living with the attitude of "God loves me so much that He literally died for Me and rose again to bring me into His family" - and believing the incomprehensible depth of that love deep in your heart. It means sharing that love, in whatever way you can, *including* telling others about the One whom you represent - God. Christ Himself.

There has been a lot of focus on people being vaccinated or not. If you have not received both covid-19 vaccinations, I strongly urge you to do so. Not because you think you can 'cheat death' or for any selfish reason. Rather, I strongly urge you to get vaccinated for two reasons: God wants His Images to be healthy, as much as we can manage. And God wants His Images to be life-bearers, not death-bringers. It has been demonstrated that while getting vaccinated does not guarantee you will not get

sick, it dramatically lessens the timespan that you can pass the sickness onto others if you do get sick. It also dramatically lessens the impact of the sickness on you (as is being shown by statistics which show the numbers in hospital between vaccinated and unvaccinated). God wants you to take care of yourself as His Image, and to care for others as His representative.

There has been a lot of focus on the revealing of unmarked graves and the taking of children into the residential school system of last century. Rather than listen to all the news reports and social media and sit passively, I would like to challenge each and every one: reach out and build relationships. If you are not indigenous, get to know the indigenous Images of God. If you are indigenous, reach out to the not-indigenous Images of God. Truly get to know each other, as children of Christ. Pray. Represent God to each other. Regardless of what political party you voted for, challenge the status quo wherever you find injustice or ill-health. There is no excuse for lack of safe, drinkable water, anywhere in our land. There is no excuse for lack of housing for everyone who wants it. There is no excuse for some people having ready access to health care, while others do not. Build relationships with each other - and in your relationship with Christ as His Image, represent God in what God would want. In other words, be an answer to God's prayer.

May the blessing of Christ be with you, as you walk in His kingdom.
+David