

The Kingdom is Near

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Por: Father Edward Hopkins, LC | Fuente: Catholic.Net

Jesus told his disciples a parable. "Consider the fig tree and all the other trees. When their buds burst open, you see for yourselves and know that summer is now near; in the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

Introductory Prayer: Dear Jesus, I believe in you and in the Kingdom you are building in and through me. I believe in the value of my sacrifice and struggles united to yours. I hope to arrive to heaven when you say it is time. I wish to spend myself for those I should love the most.

Petition: Thy Kingdom come, both now and forever!

1. **See for Yourselves:** In today's Gospel, Jesus is responding to the disciples' anxious plea for a "when" and a "with what warning" the end will come (Luke 21:7). He tells them some signs that will precede the imminent fall of Jerusalem as well as the coming of the Son of Man "on the clouds." But these will all be very apparent, like the coming of summer. So don't be obsessed with figuring out the "when." Focus on living and knowing the Kingdom of God now. How easily we are distracted with all that happens around us, yet how difficult it is to be aware of the Kingdom and its demands in my heart and my relations to others in my life! What efforts do I make to discover and to know the present demands of his Kingdom in my life?

2. **The Kingdom of God Will Come:** Jesus has used many images to describe the Kingdom of God. Like the mustard seed, it is hard to recognize at first. It begins small and grows slowly. But it will come, and this must be our daily prayer of desire: "Thy Kingdom Come!" We must resist a very real temptation. Almost unconsciously we want it to be a worldly Kingdom that will come during our lifetime. We work and pray as though we will soon arrive at our goals and rest from all our spiritual labors. This leads us to get easily discouraged at our lack of progress in prayer and virtue, no less than with the problems that surround us. No, we must live with hope, pushing forward with growing confidence that the Lord will bring his Kingdom to fulfillment, both in us and in the world – when the time is right. Whose kingdom am I seeking?

3. **My Words Will Not Pass Away:** Another temptation in awaiting the Kingdom is to despair of the times of trial through which we must pass. But in the words of St. Theresa of Jesus, "all things pass," only God remains. Nothing we suffer will remain as the Kingdom approaches. And yet all these "trials" are the most valuable and powerful means to bring about the Kingdom in our own souls and in the lives of others, especially in those who wander. Use the tools of the Kingdom: Suffer trials with faith, and respond with a love that gives them an eternal value. May we never lose a moment in which to merit graces and to build the Kingdom that comes. In the end, only what we have done for God and for our brothers and sisters remains.

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, give me a greater faith and confidence that every cross and burden, no matter how trivial or small, is a means to love. I want to build your Kingdom with you. Keep me focused on the opportunities and demands of the present moment.

Resolution: I will make one small sacrifice at a meal today for someone I wish I could help more.