

[1 Samuel 15:34-16:13](#)

[Psalm 20](#)

[2 Corinthians 5:6-10, \(11-13\), 14-17](#)

[Mark 4:26-34](#)

14 June 2009

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Never underestimate the power of an Episcopalian to change the world. Especially if that Episcopalian is a St. Philippian.

The St. Philip's standard is to be personally committed to serve others locally, in neighboring areas, and thousands of miles away on the other side of the earth. Serving is a strong tradition here and provides a high standard for our youth and children of the parish. And it is an honor to serve alongside of you, doing what I can and trying to be the best that I can be.

It is only in serving others that we can truly experience the community Christ invites us to join. And it is only through serving others in the name of Christ that we can be co-creators of God's kingdom on earth.

In today's Gospel lesson Mark writes about Jesus explaining to us common folk what God's kingdom is. He never jumps on it and says straight out – "Here it is" -- the one-size-fits-all description of the kingdom. He uses pictures and stories and goes sideways about it so folks can wrap their heads around what they perceive God's kingdom to be. I love the cryptic ending that Jesus explained everything to the disciples so they would be clear about it.

Well let us be clear too. As faithful Christians we are called to *act now* to bring God's kingdom into every reality we can, not to wait for anyone else to do the work. We are the ones who are called into the vineyard to labor. We are the people who are called to scatter seed and rejoice in what comes forth, while we are simultaneously called to be the seed to bear fruit in Christ's name. In short we are the people on whom God is depending to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick and comfort the afflicted. There is no one else.

So what is the kingdom of God for which we pray every Sunday? I have been told that every moment of every day, somewhere someone is reciting the Lord's Prayer. I like the thought – don't know if it is true. But if we are praying for it, shouldn't we know what is it?

All the synoptic Gospels have the story of the scattered seed in them. In Mark and Luke, the writers talk about the kingdom of God. In Matthew the writer speaks of the kingdom of heaven. Today's theologians use terms like the reign of love, God's loving realm – words that evoke images beyond ourselves and life on this plain. None of us living knows what heaven is like but we have thoughts and hopes about it. And these images provide

us with a vision for how we interpret God's kingdom in the present tense. Because face it, there is still much work to be done in order to bring God's kingdom to fruition.

In my image of heaven, everyone is fed and loved and warm and safe. No one is beaten or humiliated, and no one is lonely. The earthly wounds people have suffered are completely healed as though they never happened. I have other images of heaven but these are the ones that drive me to work with you and others to provide charitable relief and to change systems so we end some of the obscene inequities that exist today.

I cannot feed all the hungry; I cannot quench the thirst of the dry; I cannot take home all the homeless. So, like you with tender hearts, I must learn to cope with my human limitations --knowing that people just like me are suffering simply because of where and to whom they were born. I pray for the vulnerable, give my God-given resources to transform the world today, here, now, and release my anxieties to God. And sometimes I just get angry and tired and frustrated. And when that happens I know I am doing my will and not depending on God's limitless love.

We alone cannot transform situations but as Episcopalians and Christians we can invite God into the most desperate, dark and lonely places, and ask God to transform them into good.

We can and must pray, not as the last resort but as the first option. As always *the* option. Acknowledging our powerlessness and God's powerfulness will change us and it will change the situation and how we perceive it.

As Christians we can always offer hope; for us Jesus' death is not the end but the beginning of life everlasting. We can remain rooted in the possible even while acknowledging our inability to see what is possible.

We can take small actions that collectively make a huge difference; we can bring in toiletries and food for Sharing House and Mercy Seat and SAFE thereby offering tangible assistance for those who are hungry or dirty or who need respite. We can volunteer at Rise and Shine or the Free Clinics or tens of other organizations created to help, and we can personally invite our fellow pew mates to join us.

We can give money to situations near to home and across the world when we can't physically offer help. In other words we can do the best with what we have to make the world closer to God's kingdom come so that God's will can be done on earth as in heaven.

We are called to be God's partners in creating the kingdom. Let us be the seeds that fall on fertile soil and take root in study, prayer and action. Let us also scatter the seeds of loving prayers and actions. Let us at St. Philip's be the hands and heart of Christ that we may live the prayer, "Thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Amen.