

Among the crowds and within the circle of disciples, Jesus was sowing his own seeds of discovery about God's work here on earth. The kingdom of heaven is the place where God's will is actively engaged in our lives. In one sense, it is an open window where we can get a glimpse of the elusive Almighty—at least where we can know a bit more about God's nature as we listen to descriptions of the kingdom. But in another sense, that kingdom is very much a mystery as we try to put an interpretation to just what it *is* "like;" a tiny mustard seed planted in the soil or a bit of yeast stirring in the midst of bread dough! From seed to yeast to treasure to pearls to fish nets—perhaps the best description of any common thread to find is that the kingdom of heaven is "hidden;" but that also implies that it exists and is here. The kingdom of heaven is in the midst of our lives and we are uniquely a part of it.

So much of "life;" of our lives, especially seems to be hidden in the sense that it slips on through the years faster and faster. Every now and then you stop and wonder "where" all the time has gone! If you were to set out to "find" that slipped-away-time, where would you begin? Forty years ago this summer; and it seems like only "yesterday;" I had discovered James Michener's The Source. It was his story of Israel, told through a "dig;" an archeological dig; and as the archeologists made their way down through the debris entombed in the soil, Michener made the times and the people come alive. There in the midst of a huge mound, the scientists picked their way through hundreds and hundreds of years; civilizations and peoples came and went as they sifted through the dirt. There in the context of a story, you could "measure" the years as "time" was slowly uncovered. I think we can do something like that with our own lives. We can purposely set out to discover "where" all the time has gone, as we sift through the times and places that mark our living. Time is not "hidden" somewhere. It's all there. Accounting for it has the potential of "slowing" it down and in the process, helping us realize all that has filled our lives. And through that accounting, perhaps we will discover a bit of that mysterious kingdom tucked in here and there; evident in the past. It's one place that the activity of God has been at work.

But we all must realize that the kingdom of God is very much a part of the present. Yet with the pace of our lives, that too can be hard to see. It may be easier to see by digging through the years gone by. But it is every bit our part to be active in the work of God right now—yet as Jesus alludes—the kingdom is hidden. Where would we begin to look? And maybe it is not so much a "where," as it is a "how."

The image of the farmer who took one tiny mustard seed and walked out to his field and planted just that single seed may be our beginning. When I was very young, my grandmother would show me her collection of arrowheads that her father had picked up over his life of farming in the Genesee Valley. There, behind the pace of a team pulling a plow, he would be able to spot the glistening flint as it was turned up in a furrow. We don't have to work that hard today. We talked about plowing once before. Plowing today, just like everything else has picked up with the pace of our lives so that now we see the ground beneath our feet go by in a blur. There is little hope of spying some treasure as we push our way through one task so that we can get on with the next. Why are we so busy? Why do we have so much to do? When was the last time you sat down on your deck and leafed through the words of the kingdom—this amazing story about us and God that is timeless? When was the last time you walked slowly through the kingdom with eyes pressing to see the treasures that are right here in our midst; treasures

that don't take to discovery in the midst of "hurry" and "rush;" treasures that are hidden yet come with the understanding that discovery is within our abilities to perceive?

Nothing is impossible with God. Even within the "blur" of our lives, God will reveal the kingdom to us. The tiniest of seed will still grow and open its arms to this great, wide, diverse world. The heaven will still work and multiply; the treasure will be searched for and found; there are still pearls of unequalled beauty to behold; and in the end that only God can see, there will be a sorting out.

Whether we are aware or not, God continues to stir in our lives. God is forever at work. Sometimes we have the privilege of being a part of that work; sometimes we get to "see"; "respond"; sometimes not. But I know the response that is ours is "quickened" as we actively involve ourselves in the kingdom—in the work of God; as we are consciously seeking to be in relationship with our Lord. Do we take time to reflect upon God's activity in the past? Do we intend to slow down so that we might be able to absorb "more" as we do "less"? As ideal as The Source was to read years ago, there is another "read" that is as riveting. It demands reflection. If we do reach out and open its pages, it will draw us out of the rat race we let ourselves become caught up in. I guess this is another "plug" for taking time with God's Word—this "Word;" this involvement with what Jesus described as "old" and "new;" yes, the recorded activity of God in the past, and for us the new relationship we know through Christ—for us, alive in our hearts through the Spirit; and in the pages of the New Testament.

Slow down. Take more time to reflect on what is happening in your life. The kingdom of heaven is in the midst of all you do. When was the last time you slipped into a chair on the deck and let God speak with you?

Amen.

"Slowing down in the kingdom" Matthew 13:31-33,44-51 072708 Mkh