

LIVING A KINGDOM LIFE

+ *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts, be now and always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.*

In today's Gospel, Jesus begins to prepare the Disciples for His departure to the Father and the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to enable them to live a new and vigorous life in the Spirit – a Kingdom Life!

In the modern-day climate, living a Kingdom Life is usually equated with the large mega-churches and their 'prosperity gospel' in which followers are encouraged to seek the wealth of this world and all its trappings. Lack of material wealth and prosperity is seen as a failure of faith, almost a curse, in fact – this is something which is entirely contrary to what true Christian Faith is all about.

If we are looking at living a Kingdom Life, we always seek examples, and we need look no further than The Virgin Mary for our inspiration. Humble, obedient and dignified, she submitted to the will of God in everything. Surely, she should have been rewarded with material things for this faithful obedience? But, at the visit to the Temple for the Feast of the Purification, Simeon prophesied that *"a sword will pierce your own soul also"* [Luke 2 : 32] Thirty three years later, she saw her son die a terrible death on the Cross of Calvary and she experienced the devastation of loss and pain.... It was the cost of her living out a Kingdom Life.

Jesus does not play games with us...He does not lure us into discipleship with empty promises of passing material things. Jesus, calling the young man to follow Him said *"Foxes have holes, and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay His head...."* [Matt 8:20] The most blessed and noble Life was shunned by most (as He still is today) and found no support or comfort upon earth. Jesus always tells us from the start the price we will have to pay for following Him. He will show us, usually through Scripture, or through a godly friend, even through a prophecy as He did with Mary; but be assured, following Him will be costly, and He will always let you know the price.....

Mary understood this, from the time she said *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word..."* How she did that, I cannot know...by her own strong faith? By the power of the Holy Spirit? One thing is sure, and that is that she followed with complete obedience and submission from the Cradle to the Tomb and beyond.....she willingly embraced the cost of living a Kingdom Life.

We are very soft as modern Christians. We imagine that we are being noble when we 'fast' for 40 days and treat spiritual discipline as some sort of punishment! What God has always required is a higher life, more dedicated and receptive to His will. Our Epistle today tells us that we are *'strangers and pilgrims'* and Peter urged his readers to conform to godly standards and not to earthly ones...the Kingdom Life has to be lived out as a Kingdom man or woman, with eyes fixed above, with a standard of life that exudes godliness and faith and a yearning for our future in Christ. The Kingdom Life is a constant proclamation of the Presence of God in the world through YOU, as your own life mirrors our Master and Lord, despite all other circumstances. That is our high calling – living out a life of obedience and humility, treating others with God's respect and love, and seeking the best for them, and not necessarily for me; being prepared to accept ridicule, betrayal, suffering and even martyrdom, if that is God's plan for us.

The analogy of a soldier or an athlete is often used in Holy Scripture for a very good reason. Both require dedication, hardship in training, self-denial, pain, competition and even the terror of battle.... but the victory is sweet – it is Eternal Life with Jesus! *That* is the fruit of the Kingdom Life!

Bishop Fulton J Sheen has said *"People are turning away from Christianity today not because it is too hard, but because it is too soft"* How right he is. People seek comfort, pleasure and wealth – the tangible security of the things of the earth. Kingdom Living seeks first His Kingdom and His righteousness.... this brings us the security of knowing our eternal destiny is ensured in Christ – a difficult choice for some, but never for the

serious Disciple. Are you ready to live the Kingdom Life? Can you say, with *Mary* “*Be it done to me according to Thy Will?*”

In the Name + of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen