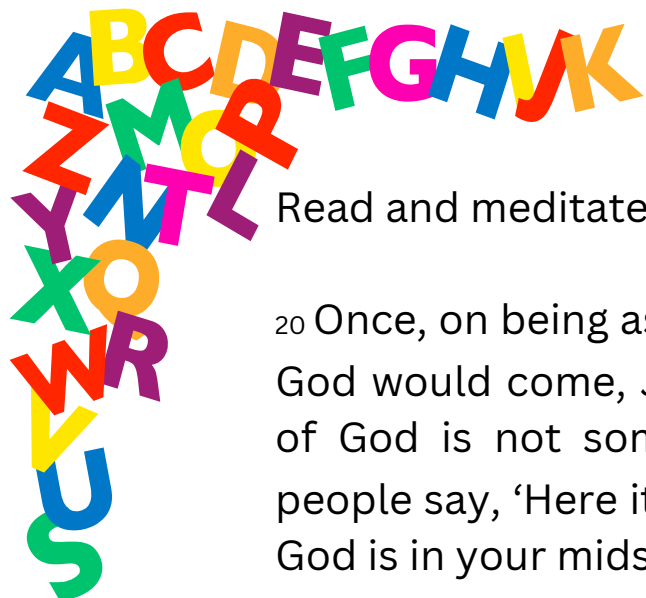




For Further Study

Read and meditate on the passage below:

²⁰ Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, ²¹ nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.” (MLuke 17:20-21)

This passage comes from Luke’s gospel account and has been one of the most influential sayings of Jesus in my life. As the gospel storytellers commonly portray, Jesus is approached by the religious traditionalists, also known as the Pharisees. On this occasion, they ask Jesus when the kingdom of God will arrive on earth. This might seem like a genuine question, but at the heart of their question, the Pharisees are trying to get Jesus to give a specific timeline of “end-time” events.

Unlike many religious leaders since, Jesus elects to not give a time for the coming of the kingdom of God. Rather, he shifts the conversation from “when” to “what.” He says that the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed. By this, Jesus is inferring that the kingdom of God is not a one-time specific event. It is an ongoing movement of God. In addition, Jesus says that his kingdom is not something that is here and not there; it doesn’t have specific proximity. God’s kingdom is everywhere that God reigns. Said differently, in whatever circumstances we welcome God’s leadership and choose to follow his ways, God’s kingdom exists.

How can this be? Jesus explains: “The kingdom of God is in you all” (The pronoun here is in 2nd person plural form.). While God reigns in the hearts of his people, that is not the primary point. Jesus is emphasizing that God reigns in the collective lives of people who live out his heavenly values on earth. So, our commission is to know God and his values and then to live them out, extending the kingdom of God on earth in a way that reflects heaven.

PRACTICE:

Consider ways you can extend God’s kingdom on earth.

