

What Kind of Kingdom?

Some have interpreted Jesus' statement "My kingdom is not from this world" (John 18:36) to mean that Jesus promises good things only in some distant future, as if we need not worry about justice or poverty in this life. However, in his actions and teachings throughout his life, Jesus clearly cared very much about the here and now of this world.

In the Lord's prayer, we say, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven." We are praying for God's will in this world, the only home and society we know. But what does it look like for God's will to be done on earth?

Jesus disappointed his followers, who expected a revolutionary leader. In generation after generation, revolutions come and go. Those who were on the bottom get to be on the top for a spell. Inevitably, we have the same old concentration of power in high places, insiders versus outsiders, the haves and the have-nots. The names and titles change, but the system does not.

By the typical standards of a political revolution, Jesus' execution meant he was a total failure. But he embodied a different kind of power, testifying to a truth larger and deeper and ultimately stronger than any revolution. In his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus jammed up the whole system that keeps cycling back around to perpetuate violence, retribution, inequality, and exclusion.

Through Jesus, the kingdom of God breaks in amid the old kingdoms that rise and fall, bringing a new reign of love, forgiveness, and peace. As a beloved community that longs to break free from old cycles of worldly power, we continue to pray for God's kingdom to come, for renewal that is deeper and more lasting than any political movement. And we continue to work for a world where all of God's children and God's creation are treated with respect, justice, and love.