

March Word of Life

'The kingdom of God has come to you.' (Lk 11:20)

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God's kingdom is Jesus present among us. We experience this when we love one another. He is almighty and conquers every evil. This is what the Jews of the time of Jesus were waiting for: the arrival of God's kingdom. As soon as he began going around the villages and towns, Jesus started to proclaim: 'The kingdom of God has come near to you' (Lk 10:9). Then immediately after that: 'The kingdom of God has come to you'; 'the kingdom of God is among you' (Lk 17:21). In the person of Jesus, God's very self had come into the midst of God's people and, decisively and with strength, taken back control of history so as to lead it to its goal. Jesus's miracles were a sign of this.

In the Gospel passage that this Word of Life comes from, Jesus had just healed a man who was mute, freeing him from the devil who held him prisoner. It was the demonstration that he had come to conquer evil, every evil, and finally establish the kingdom of God. This term 'the kingdom of God' was the Jewish people's way of saying that God acted for the sake of Israel, freeing the people from every form of slavery and evil, guiding them to justice and peace, flooding them with joy and good things. This was the act of that God who Jesus revealed as 'Father' - mysterious, loving and full of compassion, aware of the needs and sufferings of each of his children.

We too need to hear Jesus's proclamation: 'The kingdom of God has come to you.'

Looking around us we often have the impression that the world is dominated by evil, that the violent and the corrupt have the upper hand. At times we feel ourselves at the mercy of hostile forces, of dangerous events stronger than we are. We feel impotent in the face of wars and environmental calamity, of massacres and climate change, of migration and financial and economic crises.

Yet this is where Jesus's proclamation is set. It invites us to believe that he, right now, is conquering evil and is establishing a new world. In the month of March twenty five years ago, speaking to thousands of young people, Chiara Lubich entrusted them with her dream, 'it is possible to make the world a better place...almost a single family, as if belonging to just one country.' Then as now, this looked like a utopia. For the dream to become reality, however, she invited them to live mutual love, in the certainty that acting like this they would have had 'Christ among you, Christ himself, the Almighty, and from him you can hope

for all things.' Yes, it is he who is the kingdom of God. And so, what do we do? Act in such a way as to have him always in our midst. Chiara went on to say:

'He himself will work with you in your countries because he will, in a certain way, come again into the world wherever you meet, because you will make him present through your mutual love, through your unity. And he will enlighten you about all that is to be done. He will guide you, he will sustain you, he will be your strength, your fervour, your joy. Because of him, the world around you will be converted to living in harmony; every division will be healed...

Love, therefore, love among you and love sown in many corners of the earth among individuals, among groups, among nations; love sown by every means possible so that the invasion of love, of which we have spoken at times in the past, may become a reality and so that, also through your contribution, the civilization of love we all await may begin to take on solid form. You have been called to this, and you will see great things.'

Fabio Ciardi