

Pentecost 6A

July 20, 2014

Ken Wratten at St Stephen's, San Jose

Genesis 28:10-19a      Jacob experiences God's presence for the first time: Jacob's ladder

Romans 8:12-25      We groan inwardly while we wait for adoption

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43      The parable of the seeds and tares

## Being a Kingdom Thinker

Last Thursday I was on grandparent duty, taking Kendall to guitar class. After taking her to the upstairs classrooms I went back to Ruth's car that I was driving (because my car was in the shop). I drove to the parking lot exit, and stopped for about 15 seconds to check my map for the name of the street I had to turn right on to get home. The car shook sideways; I looked to my right; and I saw the big SUV that had backed out of its parking space directly into the right side of RUTH'S car. I got out of the car, thinking 'how could they not see me?', and 'how bad is it going to be?', and other thoughts I won't share with you.

The driver pulled back into her parking space, got out, and immediately said she was so very sorry, she was talking to her son and not even looking, and am I okay? Then I realized my head was in my hands, and I was shaking my head, and saying 'Oh, no!' I said, 'Yes, I'm fine. They are just cars, nobody was hurt. Oh, no!' She said, are you sure you are okay? 'Well, I just got a call that my car, in the shop, will cost \$1,000 for a broken part. AND, this is my wife's car. And I am taking it home with a dent in it'

We exchanged insurance information. Friday I called my insurance company, and found out that I had to call the other person's insurance company to file the claim. I started imagining that by now the other driver will have decided that it was not their fault; and I would have to pay for the repairs. People change their minds about what happens.

I called the other driver's insurance company yesterday, nervous about how that was going to go. She had already called in the accident; she had already explained that it was completely her fault; and she took total responsibility for any damages. I was surprised and kept saying, 'Really?'

For me, in that experience this past week, I felt a lesson was in it for me, that God is near. I prejudged what would happen, and that was not what

happened. The other driver took responsibility, did what was right, and showed real integrity. I was quick to judge, thankfully kept that to myself, learned my judgment was wrong, and today feel like the whole affair was a spiritual lesson. Learning the quality of character of the driver felt like knowing that God's world does sometimes touch this world. As Jesus told the 12 disciples to announce when he first sent them out, "Tell people, the K of G is near."

Let me share a second, shorter story. A friend of mine was asked by a friend to borrow \$100. The money was loaned, and later the second friend assured the first friend that the money would be repaid. The first friend said; "My having the money was a blessing; and I got to bless you with it. If you give it back, you will be giving back the blessing I was able to give you. I don't want the money back. Let me give you that blessing." I think that story is another example that the K of Heaven is near us; and it touches us.

The parable Jesus taught about the good seeds and the weeds, was a lesson to explain what our new relationship with God is like. We are God's children. And in that relationship, prejudging, and judging, holding back generosity, and keeping blessings for ourselves are not part of that new relationship.

Psalm 139 says this point so very beautifully.

"Lord, you have searched me out and know me; you know my sitting down and my rising up."

The One who knows us the best and loves us the most is the One who finally will judge us. And part of our duty as His children, is to accept more, to trust more, to judge less, to think in terms of God's Kingdom being very, very near to us, if we take the time and effort to notice.

Paul wrote that although God is the Father of all, not all people are God's children. Being a child of God requires adoption by God. That does not happen by birth, but by entering into relationship with God.

(Jacob entered into that relationship with God when he realized 'the Lord is in this place - and I did not know it!')

The Kingdom of Heaven is not a geographical location, but a spiritual realm where God rules. We are invited to join that realm, God's Kingdom, when we decide to live the life of Grace; when we risk living in a personal relationship with God; when we engage in Kingdom Thinking; and when we commit to Kingdom Living.

It did cost \$900 to fix my car.

Ruth's car does have a dent in it.

I experienced the Kingdom of Heaven last week!

It is possible, today, here and now, to experience the Kingdom of Heaven. It is near to us; sometimes it breaks through and touches us. So how can we be deliberate about crossing into that Kingdom?

Today's Scripture tells us how easy it is:

Think like a resident of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Invite God in.

Ask God the Holy Spirit to guide us to be a Kingdom Thinker.