The Kin-Dom of God; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Pent 15A/Prop18A
Second Presbyterian Church
M. Evelyn Graham
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Scripture Reading:

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5]and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; [6]and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. [7]To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Sermon:

Semantics is the study of word, phrase, or text meaning. Why do we study semantics? Because words are important to get across the mean in which we intend. We can call someone nice, or we can call them delightful. Both nice and delightful mean the same thing, but delightful gives us a particular picture of someone we might love to be around, more so than just a nice person.

Sometimes one word can mean something in one context, but something entirely different in another context. Take the word cake. I like chocolate cake. In this sentence you might take my meaning to be that I have eaten chocolate cake and enjoyed eating it. But if I say, writing this sermon was a piece of cake, the word cake takes on a different meaning altogether. Most of us would interpret this use of the word cake as easy or not hard to do. By the way, no sermon is a piece of cake.

Many who study the Bible consider theological words to be important. This importance of words is why we have so many versions of the Bible. Each time a new interpretation comes out, it includes words which represent our time and have meaning to our current life.

Over the centuries many words have been used to describe God: a Rock, our Shield, Lord, Almighty, Holy One, Adonai, even I AM, as we learned last week in our story of Moses and the burning bush.

None of these words can encompass God's being. They all fall short of encompassing the meaning of God. However, some words actually bring us negative connotations or meanings of who God is. Take, for example, the word king.

God as King was probably a helpful way of understanding God for the people who lived during the centuries in which the Bible was written. At a certain point, the Israelites wanted a king to rule over them. Kings were prevalent during Biblical times and most of the surrounding cultures of the Israelites had a monarchical structure of power. After the kings of Israel and Judah were defeated

and the people were carried off into exile, the prophets began to speak of a new king who would bring a reign of peace where the oppression and fear of human kings would no longer exist.

God as King can also suggest a male dominated, hierarchical, forceful, and exclusive God. Those who associate the word king with unhealthy images of masculinity or corrupt governments, might see God as King to be an unhelpful and even hurtful metaphor for our God.

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, a Hispanic Feminist, challenged the theological use of God as King. She coined the word "kin-dom" in the 1980s "as part of an effort to remove patriarchal terminology from the language of faith."[1] Her focus of study was both Liberation Theology combined with Feminist Theology. Liberation theology better understands God as one who exists to be with the struggling rather than a God who rules over the people. Isasi-Diaz's Feminist Theology recognized the importance of the Latina experience[2] as it relates to God.

Isasi-Diaz's "Kin-dom" takes us from God seen as a ruling figure to God seen as one who is working with and through people to walk beside those who are oppressed and hurting. Turning Kingdom to Kin-dom, we are transported from a place of being ruled to a place of love, compassion, and cooperation.

As I dug further, I found that the Presbyterian Church USA wrestled with this new language of kin-dom at GA223 in 2018. Raj Nadella, a New Testament professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, defended the language of kin-dom as this, the Kin-dom of God[3] he says, "…is built 'not through competition but in mutual cooperation and solidarity,…People who are part of kin-dom use their resources and privilege to advocate for others who are less privileged'… the idea of 'kin-dom' is supported by Jesus' life and teachings…[and] will help Presbyterians 'think differently about how to be church in the world.'"[4]

How to be church in the world…the Kin-dom of God.

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[1] Steve Lunderburg, "A Kin*dom for Everyone," from Stories of Faith: Living Luthern from the ELCA website, https://www.livinglutheran.org/sofia/a-kindom-for-everyone.php accessed 9/4/23.

[2] Laura Hymson, "Liturature Review by Laura Hymson," for Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria. *Mujerista Theology.* Orbis: Maryknoll, 1996, in the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project from Brandeis University website, https://www.brandeis.edu/projects/fse/christianity/diaz.html accessed 8/8/23.

[3] "Familia de Dios" is the translation of the English language "kin-dom of God" used by the theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz in her book In La Lucha / In the struggle: elaboration of a Mujerista theology.

[4] Eva Stimson, "Bible study at GA223 will explore 'kin-dom' versus 'kingdom': Seminary professor duo to lead reflections in plenary, not committees, 2/12/28, from PC(USA) website, https://www.pcusa.org/news/2018/2/12/bible-study-ga223-will-explore-kin-dom-versus-king/ accessed 8/8/23.

Today we gather as a community of believers trying to be church in the world. Our goal here is to "Be The Church," the Kin-dom of God. Today you have been encouraged, informed, fed, and now theologically motivated to commit yourself to participate in the life of this church in this time at this place. In many ways we are trying to expand the nature of who God is for us by changing kingdom to kin-dom and by presenting the many ways and opportunities we can be the church together. As the Apostle Paul said, *There are varieties of gifts* (v. 4) *and varieties of activities* (v. 5), *but God makes them all possible for the common good* (v. 6-7), for the Kin-dom. Not only are the ways numerous, but your personal involvement is critical to the Kin-dom of God, because it takes all of us to use our gifts for the common good.

As we conclude this time, I invite you to use the few minutes of silence after the sermon to consider and commit to how you can be a part and contribute to God's Kin-dom now. The time and talents form is designed to help you know how many different ways you can Be the Church. The church leaders will use these forms to help everyone get involved and the goal is for everyone to be involved because creating God's Kin-dom today will take all of us using our God-given gifts to work toward God's Kin-dom. During the offering, you will have the chance to come up and put your form, as well as your offering, in the baskets at the front.

By joining in this effort, you are forming God's Kin-dom right here at Second Presbyterian. From Bible study, to fellowship, to mission, to helping with children's Sunday School, you commit to the importance of God in your life by your willingness to give back to God's people. When you give back, the reward you receive cannot be measured in any human terms. It is your life and your soul that will benefit from the relationship you continue to form with God and one another. A relationship that is sure to grow and a life that is sure to thrive as we walk together in God's Kin-dom.

In the name of God who calls us, Christ who joins us, and the Spirit who makes the Kin-dom of God possible. Amen.