

# THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH



Works of Mercy (detail)

Jen Norton

It's staring us in the face, and we don't see it.

It's spreading fire over the earth and we ignore it.

It's shaking the nations with a thousand signs, and we're too busy fund-raising to notice.

The one thing Jesus revealed with every parable, every healing:

## The kingdom of God.

***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***

***"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field..."***

***"The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand!  
Repent and believe the good news!"***

**The kingdom of God was Jesus' single focus.**

**It still is.**

When will we open our eyes?

## The kingdom and the church

While Jesus is focused on the kingdom, it seems we Christians are focused on the church.

True, Jesus says, ***"On this rock I will build my church"***.

But Jesus' church is not a religious institution with pompous men walking around in fancy robes.

With millions in the bank.

And tons of real estate.

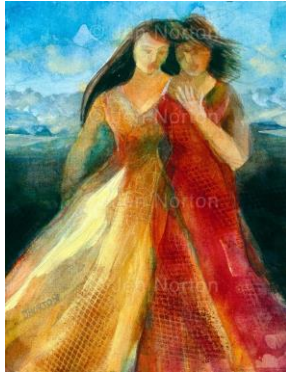
Jesus' church is not a religious club for like-minded people who hold "Christian values".

Jesus' church is simply the *ecclesia*, his followers, gathered around his Name.

The *ecclesia* is Christ's Body on earth.

The *ecclesia* is the doorway to God's kingdom.

Wherever people are truly gathered in Jesus' name, there is the *ecclesia*---the church.



Heart to Heart  
Jen Norton

**But Jesus did not preach about the church.**

**He preached about the kingdom.**

Only twice in the gospels do we hear the word “church” (*ecclesia*) on Jesus' lips.

**His focus was always the kingdom.**

**The kingdom of God.**

***“The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand.  
Repent and believe the good news!”***

***Mark 1***

**The kingdom is simply God's World.**

Where God is known and loved.

Where there are no lies.

Where truth rules.

Where sickness and death are no more.

Where love is supreme.

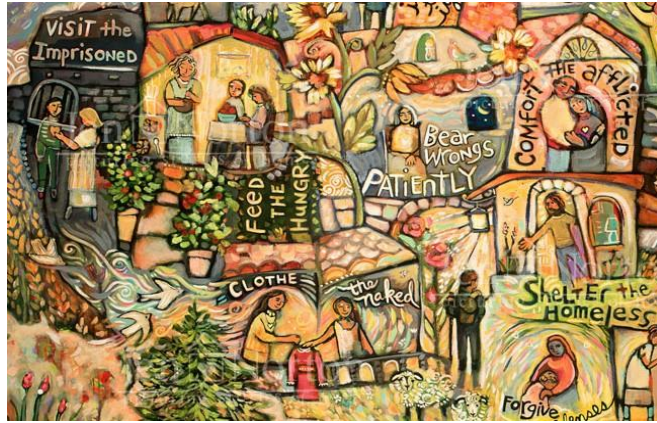
And joy has no end.

**The kingdom of God is already here---in part.**

Wherever Jesus is known and loved, there is the kingdom.

Wherever men and women show mercy to every neighbor, and love even their enemy, they have found the kingdom.

Wherever leaders are down on the floor washing feet, and the greatest are the least, there is the kingdom.



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But that's only the beginning.

We are awaiting the kingdom's arrival in its fullness.

Waiting for Jesus to return and take charge.

No more wars.

No more lies.

No more pain, sickness and death.

Just glorious peace.

### Isaiah was given a vision.

***Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.***

***And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms.***

***Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.***

***A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Mid'ian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.***

**Isaiah 60**

**Daniel received a glimpse.**

***Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the issue of these things?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.***

***Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand.***

***Daniel 12***

**The Apostle John was taken to the edge of glory and shown the kingdom's arrival.**

***Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.***

***There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads.***

***And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.***

***Revelation 22***

It's time for us to see the church for what it is, and the kingdom for what it is.

**The church** ....Is the Body of Christ on earth.

It is not an institution ruled by religious professionals.

It is the creation of Jesus alone.

Wherever people are gathered around Jesus only, there is the church.

Wherever the kingdom of God is revealed on this earth, there is the church.

**The kingdom** .... Is God's World penetrating this world with truth.

Preparing for the day when the world, as we know it, will be no more.

Calling all who have ears to hear to come into the light.

Until Jesus arrives and takes the throne.

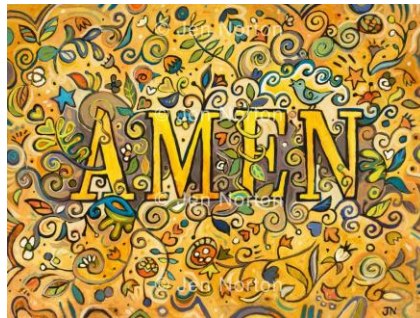
Then Gabriel's prophecy to Mary will be fulfilled.

***“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.***

***He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High;***

***and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.”***

**Luke 1**



*Prayer- Holy, perfect Lord rise upon us and reveal your wonderful kingdom to us. Draw us to your light so we can know you and love you with all we have... so that faith, obedience, mercy and love purify us as we seek your kingdom. Cause us to shine as we find your kingdom and live your kingdom now. MM*

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Featured Art: Kind permission of Jen Norton details from the piece [“Works of Mercy”](#) also “Heart to Heart” and “Amen”.  
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THE LAMB  
WHO WAS SLAIN  
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