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Heaven here and now

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Sometimes we hear people say, “When I get to heaven . . .” and then muse about all the good that will happen in God’s kingdom in the future, in some far-off location.

Surely, the kingdom of heaven is associated with inexhaustible good for all, everlasting health and happiness, and immortal being. There God governs with love, harmony, and holy purpose all that He made. No limits of time or space define the kingdom, just the presence of divine Mind and Mind’s ever-unfolding creation. In the kingdom of heaven all is spiritual, so there is no limited material substance liable to accident, pain, disease, impairment, sin, or death. Material laws, forces, beliefs, opinions, theories, and prognoses are nonexistent, because God’s law of unbroken harmony reigns forever.

But, is heaven a far-off place or event? Do we have to wait to experience this divine harmony? Christ Jesus had much to say about the kingdom of heaven, including, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). So all the infinite goodness and harmony associated with the kingdom of heaven is already going on now, all around.

While we may not see it with our physical senses, we are already nestled in the kingdom—and it is in us. Jesus also preached, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20, 21). Each one of us, then, is already in the kingdom of heaven, where the blessings of divine Love surround every child of God. How wonderful that God gives us the kingdom, the consciousness of universal harmony and the comprehension of our individual complete and true being in all its glory.

A key word that Jesus included in his wonderful affirmation of the presence of the kingdom was *repent*, which is translated from a Greek word meaning “to think differently.” It is a change of *thought* from a material perspective to a spiritual one, not a change of time or location, that reveals the heavenly harmony. This change comes through the activity of the Christ, “the divine message from God to men speaking to the human consciousness,” as Mary Baker Eddy writes in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (p. 332). This divine message from God to man reveals the facts of being, thus causing thought to shift and think out from God. This spiritual, Christly consciousness, this newness of thought, is found in the Sermon on the Mount, in the more than thirty parables Jesus gave to us, and in his other teachings.

For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount we find, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). How wonderful to be called to perfection because our completeness is sourced in God. This Christly message bids us to think differently and to turn from a material view of ourselves to embrace the conscious nowness of our wholeness and health as God’s spiritual offspring, and so discover heaven’s harmony.

Not only did Jesus preach the ever-presence of the kingdom of heaven, but his countless healings were proofs of its nowness and truth. He brought to light the power and presence of the love of God expressed right here on earth. We read in Luke: “And the people . . . followed [Jesus]: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing” (9:11). Jesus’ healing of the man with a withered hand showed the man’s wholeness in the here and now. The feeding of thousands of people with a tiny amount of food showed that abundance is here and now. And Jesus’ resurrection proved that indestructible life is here and now. All of Jesus’ healings are open windows in which we can see the here-and-now reality of heaven.

Thus, Jesus connected the kingdom of heaven with healing. He said to his disciples, “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:7, 8). Wasn’t he saying that since the kingdom of heaven is at hand and is forever, it precludes sin, sickness, and death?

Jesus' command speaks to us today. Discordant conditions are overcome as we realize the kingdom of God is at hand and within us. *Science and Health* gives a spiritual definition of the *kingdom of heaven* as "the reign of harmony in divine Science; the realm of unerring, eternal, and omnipotent Mind; the atmosphere of Spirit, where Soul is supreme" (p. 590). This kingdom of heaven within us shows forth Love's tender control and the reign of Soul. When we experience metaphysical healing, the kingdom of heaven is seen to be reigning within us.

I had an opportunity that called upon me to repent, "think differently," and see this reign of the kingdom of heaven in my experience. We had recently moved into a new home, and I needed to run a quick errand. The electric garage door opener wasn't working, and the garage door had no handle on the outside, so I put my fingers in the space between two of the horizontal sections of the garage door, thinking I would use my handhold there to pull the door down and then quickly remove my fingers before the horizontal sections closed together, leaving no space between them. But the door moved surprisingly fast, and my fingers on one hand got caught in the downward force of the door as it shut with a bang.

Seeing that the door had completely shut on my fingers, I wondered how exactly my fingers could be in a space that had no space! I immediately turned away from that picture and the shock from the extreme pain, and quickly lifted the door with my other hand, setting the fingers free. I got into the car and prayed.

Here was the moment to think differently, to turn from the material picture to the kingdom of heaven viewpoint. One of Jesus' parables came to thought: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" (Matthew 13:47, 48).

The parable spoke to me of how demonstrating heavenly harmony requires us to sort through the mixed worldly picture that suggests the coexistence of good and evil. Our job, our joy of being, is to embrace, affirm, and acknowledge the good, and toss—reject—the bad.

In that moment, the first embrace of good was a clear acknowledgment of where I was—safe in the kingdom where Spirit is supreme and the divine Science of harmony reigns. The first toss of the bad was to reject the temptation to look at the hand. If I relied on the material

picture to tell me the condition of my substance, I would be perpetuating the false picture instead of honoring the “reign of harmony in divine Science.”

I found the first sentence in “the scientific statement of being” in *Science and Health* very helpful in determining what to toss: “There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter” (p. 468). Taking each aspect of the statement, I tossed out the thought that there could be life in matter, a destructive force that could injure. There was no truth or present reality in the matter picture, for it did not match up with the heavenly view. There was no intelligence in matter to make a mistake nor an intelligence causing or sustaining pain. There was no substance in matter, subject to accident or damage.

Then I embraced the next line in the statement, “All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all.” All life, truth, intelligence, and substance express infinite Mind, perpetually unfolding harmony.

I felt no doubt that these truths I prayed were statements of divine Science, the kingdom of heaven within, revealing the unbroken and eternal harmony of my being already present! And this conviction was not something personal that I had to muster up. I felt it was Spirit’s conviction of its supremacy, shining forth as my conscious being as Spirit’s witness. It was like what First John says, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (4:4). Whatever the world view was saying, the kingdom of heaven within was supreme.

This prayer lasted just a few minutes, but it felt like a rocket instantly lifting me to the heights of heaven. In what seemed like a nanosecond, these spiritual truths in thought propelled me above the seeming darkness of the material sense of pain and severe injury, to the sunlight and clear skies of the presence of heavenly harmony! There was no question about it—I had never stepped outside of God’s heavenly law of harmony.

I felt the loving presence of the Christ revealing to me my oneness with God in the here and now. Right there and then I was one in being with Spirit. God was taking care of me, keeping me as He made me, perfectly whole. This unwavering love of Love, the reality of Truth, the absolute supremacy of Spirit and my bearing witness to it, was super clear! I felt pure joy to be in the kingdom of heaven and knew that all was well.

Continuing to the market, fixing dinner, going to a church meeting, counting paper ballots for votes taken at the meeting, were all done with painless ease. When my husband and I got back home from the church meeting, I shared with him my experience. He took my hand and saw my fingers normal, uninjured, and freely moving.

Deep gratitude continued to wing my thought. For the next several days I pondered in awe the infinite implications of this simple proof of the heavenly kingdom and of my spiritual being. This experience opened up a window of heaven that gave me a clear glimpse that we all are truly spiritual, expressing our immortal God-given life and substance—in the kingdom here and now. The government of the kingdom is the adhesion and cohesion of Life, an all-encompassing force that sustains and perpetuates the wholeness of our being forever. There is peace, security, assurance, and healing in beholding heaven as the holy consciousness of all-inclusive divine perfection, here and now.

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