
Letters to A Young Episcopalian: The Kingdom of Heaven

This letter is part of a series of fictional letters by Canon George Maxwell intended for Episcopalians young and old who wonder what it means to be faithful in the world today.

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Dear Anna,

I appreciate you asking about where Jesus is in what I have described as a journey of becoming.

We don't usually think about Jesus as a teacher advancing a curriculum designed to bring about our inner transformation, but my sense is that this is how he saw himself.

It's as if Jesus came down from a higher level of being, revealed to us who we might become, and then led us into the awareness and understanding that we would need to make that realm manifest here on earth.

Think about Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of Heaven.

I realize that the Gospels of Mark and Luke refer to the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of John uses the term "life," but essentially, they're all talking about the same thing.

Now, put aside all of the times that you have been told that the Kingdom of Heaven is a place that you will go when you die. That's true, I think; but it's more than just that. It's also a way of seeing things through God's eyes.

I like the way that Cynthia Bourgeault puts it in her book, *The Wisdom Jesus*:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is really a metaphor for a state of consciousness; it's not a place you go to, but a place you come from. It's a whole new way of looking at the world, a transformed awareness that literally turns this world into a different place."

So, you asked about the importance of Jesus in our spiritual life.

I think Jesus makes it all happen by revealing to us the one he calls Father and then leading us into a relationship with his Father that, through the Spirit, allows us to call him our Father as well.

It is the intimacy of this relationship that dissolves our sense of separation from God or each other.

They tell me that the journey of becoming ends with our being so filled with God that we can't tell where God ends, and we begin or what part of our innermost being is us and what part is God.

Every now and then I get a glimpse of this sense of oneness and I'm always thankful for it.

Your affectionate uncle,
Ames

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