

God is at hand

*“Up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I’ve topped the wind-swept heights with
easy grace*

*Where never lark, or ever eagle flew —
And, while with silent, lifting mind I’ve
trod*

*The high untrodden sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of
God.”*

This poem, “High Flight,” was written by John Gillespie McGee, Jr while test flying the new Spitfire V during the Battle of Britain in 1941. As a kid, I remember it from TV commercials for the Air Force. It impressed me watching the jets soar through the clouds, listening to the narrator deeply intone that last verse, “Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.”

Theologically, that is just right. Only you can do it wherever you are. Extend your hand. Wave it around. You have touched the face of God. The Bible says, “In him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) You and I live immersed in the presence of God the same way a fish lives in the immediate presence of water.

Jesus Christ’s message was the availability of the kingdom of God. He preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.” (Mt 4:17) Though most English translations use “heaven,” the Greek original reads “heavens.” The “heavens” in Biblical thought is the location from which God rules. More to our point, the “heavens” start with the space around our bodies. The heavens extend outward through the air and sky, our atmosphere, then up, throughout and beyond the universe. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray The Lord’s Prayer, “Our father who art in the heavens...” he was helping them locate God. God is not seated far away on the other side of the galaxy. He literally surrounds our bodies. He is close enough to see and hear the smallest motion of prayer.



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Jesus preached that the kingdom of the heavens was “at hand.” He did not mean by this, “about to come into existence.” He meant that it was HERE, now, within arm’s reach. In other words, God’s kingdom is present to be accessed. Let’s keep going. What then is the nature of this kingdom? It is the mode of existence we were always made to live under and through. Our sins (specifically our unbelief) have separated us from accessing this kingdom. The kingdom is God’s immediate and direct readiness to rule over any and all who wish to be ruled by him. As God takes thought for sparrows, so he is also willing to take thought for you. In other words, God is willing to run your life if you would like him to.

Does not your heart yearn for a totally competent leader? A leader who has complete control, who will never make a mistake, never forget about you, never betray you, never use you, never have to come back and say, “Oops, sorry. I was wrong.” Someone who tells the truth. Someone who can be trusted. Someone who has your best interests in mind. Such a leader does exist. That person is Jesus Christ. He is the king of this universe. He is willing to be your king.

This decision will place you primarily in the position of a learner (disciple). You will learn directly from Jesus how to live your life now in the kingdom of God. What will this look like? You will literally interact with him. He is alive, invisible to be sure, but fully present. He surrounds your body. If invited to do so, he will also take up residence within your body. This is why the Bible says

about believers that our bodies are “temples” of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 6:19) For all practical purposes, the Holy Spirit is Jesus present invisibly. (Jn 14:18) You will ask of him and he will answer. Usually when Jesus speaks, his voice is a still, strong, quiet whisper of thought. He will teach you how to recognize his voice. Most of all, Jesus will teach you to trust him. Obviously he will call the shots, but of course, that is exactly what a king does and exactly what we want him to do. We have decided that surely Jesus can do a better job of managing our lives than we can.

Jesus’ invitation then and now is to repent. In other words, to change your mind about who is best suited to run your life. God is willing to do so, no matter who you are or what you have done in your past. God has ALREADY reconciled you to himself by means of his Son dying on the cross! (2 Cor 5:19) You are acceptable to God right now. He will take you as you are. One step at a time, he will train you in life. The divine love and power of his kingdom, surrounding your body, is freely given you. You will learn to reach for, access, and receive this divine life. It will happen as you deliberately trust Jesus. Life in the kingdom of God will become one of inner rest, trusting Jesus completely. No longer will you need to strive or live in anxious futility. No longer will you despair over the direction your life is taking. You will even find divine help to “glory” in your tribulations, for in your weaknesses, strife, and difficulties, you will find divine aid. Each new trial will be a new opportunity to see the work of God, up close and personal. Ultimately, you will learn that you are perfectly safe—nothing can ultimately harm you. There really is nothing to fear. Trust Jesus.

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