

The December 3, 2019, HRP meeting Open Space time included the subject listed below. The notes of the discussion are outlined below.

**Advent and Eschatology:  
How Does the Reign of God Redefine Power and Politics?**

In the spirit of the theme of our HRP meeting, “Waiting,” this Open Space conducted a discussion around the subject of Advent and Eschatology. The subtitle identifies what we were trying to get at within the discussion—how does the Reign of God *redefine* power and politics. Five questions were asked. They are listed below and will help guide the contents of this written report.

Scripture references: Daniel 7, Psalm 2, 110, Mark 13, Acts 1, Colossians 3, Philippians 2, 1 Cor. 15. Themes: Temple, incarnation, apocalyptic, eschatology, Reign of God, Christology, messianic hopes, scripture, ecclesiology, ethics.

1. **What are we (the Church) waiting for?** Naturally we began with the Second Coming. However, does this notion need to be demythologized? It was then that we thought about literal and literary notions of Scriptural interpretation. That is, do we read the second coming as a literal/historical event or one that is apprehended existentially? That is, using the language of *novum* as it is delineated by the resurrection of Jesus (Moltmann), when Jesus returns, there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth. There we found ourselves struggling to try and describe what that would look like.
2. **What are the “inaugural” signs of the Reign?** The Reign of God was inaugurated by Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection. As his disciples, we are between the times. His Second Coming will complete his work and make all things right, fully and finally. But for now, we see signs of the Reign in various places and among various people. (Note: The Church may be charged with not only being responsible for spearheading such events (mission) but also recognizing them when they happen (witness) in other places among others “outside” the Church.) We listed some: the sacraments, worship in spirit and truth (Calvin), changes in power structures that help the marginalized, justice movements, nonviolent movements that challenge oppressive power structures, etc. (see Matthew 5-7, 25). We noted that such in-breakings of the future of God do not necessarily have to be with or among Christians. Such events can happen

wherever God chooses. We noted that the sermon of the day gave testimony to this truth of the Gospel.

3. **What are the “not yet” signs of the Reign?** The brokenness of the world is easily identified. Racism, violence, slavery, etc., --the list goes on. Failure to love God and neighbor best summarizes the “not yet” of the Reign.
4. **How do the Scriptures give testimony to the truth of Jesus and his message?** The love of Christ is the highlight of the NT witness. His incarnation shows us God’s love for the world. But we also talked about the resurrection. The challenge was put forth that perhaps our tendency to NOT take the resurrection of the body as a literal promise and/or historical event may be due to a form of dualism that effects our notion of God’s activity in the world. The question was asked, “Why do we recoil at the idea of resurrected human bodies?” given the Apostles’ Creed and the witness of Scripture. Admitting that such bodies would not be the same corruptible material as we have been endowed with in the here and now, we struggled with the notion of “new bodies.” Would we recognize one another in God’s future? Like the Sadducees who asked about marriage in heaven, we wondered if we knew the power of God and the Scriptures. We left those thoughts there for another day.
5. **How are Christian ethics defined and empowered?** The community must play a role here. But the community looks to its leader, Jesus Christ, whose behavior models the ethics of the Reign. Jesus also fills his people with his own spirit. This empowerment is experienced in stops and starts and is often practiced in broken ways but nevertheless effects changes in those who experience it. Love of God and neighbor also makes it incumbent upon us to challenge and change the unjust structures of society. Because when it is all said and done, love is what matters (1 Cor. 13). How we exercise that love matters. We never did get to any definition of politics as defined by the Reign of God.

I end this report with these words from N.T. Wright about Advent and Eschatology: “Every Eucharist is a little Christmas as well as a little Easter.”