

11th April 2025

Observation

On being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is in your midst.'

Bible, Luke 17:20-21

My reflection recently on "theft" reminded me of a robbery in my early ministry. Our church Youth Club bought a table-top snooker table. Six-feet-six by three-feet-three, it came with two cues, a rest, a racking triangle and the requisite number of snooker balls. We had it for two weeks before it was nicked, in broad daylight, when the janitor's back was turned. I wondered why opportunist thieves carrying a 6'6"x3'3" green snooker table hadn't been seen by somebody. "Naeb'dy ever does," the janitor bemoaned. I did some door-to-door enquiries. "Did anyone see?" kind of thing, responded to with the mantra, "Naw, 'cause naeb'dy ever does."

I reported the theft to the police. The desk-sergeant recorded the particulars: 6'6"x3'3" snooker table, green (1); snooker cues (2); racking device, brown, triangular shaped (1); snooker rest (1); balls, colours various, mostly red (22). "And nobody saw the perpetrators?" I was asked. "Naw, 'cause naeb'dy ever does," I replied. Observation of petty crime clearly wasn't in the local folk's skill-mix. And as police officers or lawyers will tell you, people's observational abilities are pretty woeful anyway.

The Pharisees in Jesus' time were good observers. They could point out someone's misdemeanour at the hundred paces. But they couldn't see The Kingdom of God. "Where is it?" they asked. "Make it clear so we can observe it and enhance others' observation skills." And Jesus said, "No need! The Kingdom of God is here, in your midst. The signs are there for all to see." The Kingdom of God, among us, in me? Goodness! I'll need to have *that* kind of observational ability in *my* skill mix ...

Oh, and in case you're wondering, the church Youth Club got its snooker-table back – complete with two cues, a rest, a racking triangle and the requisite number of snooker balls. That was due to useful local intel – *and* good observational skills – but then, that's a whole other story ...

A prayer for today

See what needs to be seen; find what's there to be found. Open your eyes, Jesus said.

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