

DÉPAYSEMENT

Where the Kingdom Hides

There is a French word I have come to love: *dépaysement*.

There really isn't a perfect English translation for it. Literally, it carries the idea of being taken out of your country, but it describes something much richer than travel. *Dépaysement* is what happens when you find yourself outside your familiar surroundings, routines, language, culture, or ways of seeing the world.



You are somewhere you don't quite know how to navigate.

And something interesting happens when that occurs.

You start paying attention.

When I am somewhere unfamiliar, I notice things I would normally walk right past. I watch how people interact. I listen more carefully to conversations. I notice expressions, behaviors, rhythms, tensions, and small details. I ask more questions because I cannot rely on what I already know.

Familiarity allows us to move through life without paying much attention. We know where things are. We know how things work. We know what comes next. Eventually, we can navigate an entire day almost automatically.

Dépaysement interrupts that.

And I have discovered that interruption can be a gift.

The Kingdom May Not Be Hiding After All

Jesus began His public ministry with a remarkable announcement:

“The kingdom of God has come near.” (Mark 1:15)

Near.

Not somewhere else. Not someday. *Near.*

Jesus seemed to see evidence of His Father's Kingdom everywhere. In fields and vineyards. Seeds and soil. Children and widows. Meals and weddings. Fishermen and tax collectors. Mustard seeds and bread dough.

Ordinary things became windows into another reality.

And what if the Kingdom is still near?

What if evidence of what God is doing surrounds us every day, but we have become so accustomed to our surroundings that we no longer notice?

The Kingdom may not be hiding from us. We may simply have become too familiar with our surroundings to see it.

That is one reason I value *dépaysement*.

It wakes me up.

The Harvest Is *Dépaysement*

For those of us who have spent much of our lives inside Christian environments, the harvest itself can feel like *dépaysement*.

The language is different. The assumptions are different. The questions are different. The expectations are different.

People may not understand our Christian vocabulary, share our conclusions, recognize our traditions, or organize their lives around the things we have learned to consider normal.

That can feel uncomfortable.

But discomfort isn't necessarily something to escape. It can be an invitation to pay attention.

When I enter the world of someone who does not share my faith, I cannot assume I already understand what they think. I have to listen. I have to ask questions. I have to learn their story.

Holy Curiosity begins to replace assumption.

And that is where *Kingdom Reconnaissance* begins.

But There Is Another Kind of *Dépaysement*

There is an even deeper layer.

I willingly enter *dépaysement*. The harvest often inhabits it.

Human beings were created for relationship with their Creator. We were designed to know Him, walk with Him, and discover who we are in relationship with Him.

When that relationship is disconnected, something is out of place.

That does not mean everyone without faith walks around feeling lost, miserable, or incomplete. Many people have meaningful relationships, fulfilling careers, wonderful experiences, and deeply satisfying lives. We should never tell people what they are supposed to be feeling.

But beneath the surface is a deeper reality.

We were created by *Someone*.

And when we are disconnected from the One who designed us, there is a kind of spiritual *dépaysement*, even when we do not have language for it.

That is why I pay attention.

Watch for Kairos

Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom actually begins one sentence earlier than we often start it.

“The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near.” (Mark 1:15)

The word translated time is the Greek word ***kairos***.

There is another Greek word for time, *chronos*, which describes time as we normally measure it: minutes, hours, days, years, yesterday, today, tomorrow. That's where we get the word *chronology*.

Kairos is different.

Kairos is an appointed or opportune moment. I like to think of it as the place where eternity intersects *chronos*, where something of God's eternal purposes becomes visible within an ordinary moment in time.

That makes Jesus' announcement even more compelling:

“The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near.”

The Kairos has come. The Kingdom has come near.

Eternity has intersected the ordinary. Pay attention.

I have learned from experience that *dépaysement* is one of the places where I am most likely to notice those moments when Kairos invades *chronos*, and the nearness of the Kingdom is revealed.

I don't think those two statements should be separated too quickly.

When the familiar is disrupted, I become more attentive.

A question someone suddenly asks.

A story they unexpectedly tell.

A longing that surfaces.

A loss they mention.

A moment of wonder.

A sentence that seems to open a door.

A conversation neither of us planned.

These moments are easy to miss when I am moving quickly, following a predetermined agenda, or simply assuming I already know what is happening.

But *dépaysement* slows me down enough to notice.

And noticing doesn't mean I immediately need to do something.

Not every Kairos moment requires an explanation, a Bible verse, a presentation, or an invitation. Sometimes the most faithful response is simply to recognize:

Something is happening here.

Pay attention.

Listen.

Stay curious.

Let the moment breathe.

Because Jesus' announcement is still shaping the way I see the world:

The Kairos has come. The Kingdom has come near.

Meet Me in the Unfamiliar

There is something beautiful about what happens when these two experiences of *dépaysement* intersect.

I step beyond what is familiar to me. I enter the world of someone who may be disconnected from the One who designed them. Neither of us completely knows where the conversation is going.

And somewhere in that shared unfamiliar territory, the Kingdom has a way of becoming visible.

A glimpse of grace.

An unexpected act of kindness.

A longing for something more.

A question about God.

A moment of honesty.

A door cracking open.

This is why I don't want to rush through the harvest looking for outcomes.

I want to wander through it with my eyes open.

We enter dépaysement intentionally. The harvest often inhabits dépaysement existentially. And somewhere in that shared unfamiliar territory, Kairos moments happen.

Perhaps that is one reason Jesus so often led His disciples beyond what was familiar.

Across the lake. Into Samaria. Toward outsiders. Into homes they might never have entered on their own. Along roads where unexpected people appeared.

Again and again, the disciples found themselves somewhere they had not expected to be, with people they had not expected to encounter, watching Jesus reveal a Kingdom they were still learning to recognize.

Maybe we need some dépaysement too.

Go somewhere unfamiliar. Sit somewhere you normally wouldn't sit. Have coffee with someone whose life looks nothing like yours. Enter someone else's world without needing to steer the conversation anywhere.

Learn their story. Listen longer than feels necessary.

Notice what makes you uncomfortable. Notice what surprises you. Notice what awakens your curiosity.

And watch for **Kairos**.

Because the **Kingdom** of God is near.