

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Part 3: "Your Kingdom Come"

Matthew 6:9-13

By David A. Ritchie

Sunday, January 20, 2021 (Epiphany Season)

Scripture Reading

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (Matthew 6:9–13).

Heavenly Father, this last week we witnessed a transfer of power in our nation. But today, we acknowledge that your everlasting kingdom knows no end. I pray your Spirit would give us eyes that see your kingdom and hearts that would desire for it to come in our lives. May this kingdom be in our lives on earth as it is in heaven. We pray this in and for the glorious name of Jesus, who is eternally your Son and our King. Amen.

Introduction

Today, we are continuing our study of a very famous section of Scripture known as "*the Lord's Prayer*," where we have been meticulously examining the way that Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. To catch you up on where we have been, firstly, the Lord's Prayer has taught us about the God to whom we pray; that he is our God, that he is the sovereign and powerful God who dwells in heaven, and he is our Father who hears the voice of his children. Secondly, the Lord's Prayer has taught us to plead with God to empower us to hallow and honor his name with all of our thoughts, words, and actions. This week, we will explore the next petition of the Lord's Prayer, found in verse 10 of our reading: "*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10).*

Exposition

Here, Jesus teaches his followers to pray for something that he talked about more than anything else – "*the kingdom of God*." As many biblical theologians have observed, the kingdom of God is the central message of Jesus's earthly ministry.¹

But to understand what the kingdom of God really is, why it is such good news, and why we should be eager to pray for its coming, we first must come to understand that we are in foreign territory as Americans.

I once read a story of a British evangelist who came to minister in the United States. He first stopped in the city of Philadelphia, and before his first ministry opportunity, he went to visit the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall. He went to the tourist stores that sold paraphernalia of the American Revolution. There were posters and T-shirts that said revolutionary slogans like "No Taxation without Representation!" and "Don't Tread on Me." But the one that really caught his attention was a placard

¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 57

that said, “We serve no sovereign here!” When he saw this sign, he understood just how hard his evangelistic task would be in the States. He said, “How one earth am I going to preach the gospel to a people who have such a profound aversion to the notion of a kingdom?”²

Now, most days, I am very thankful that I live in the United States of America instead of the North American Colonies of Great Britain.

However, I think the British evangelist saw something about us that we need to see. Americans have a cultural predisposition to worship at the altar of absolute individual autonomy. We tend to reject any notion of someone or something being sovereign over us, even when that someone is God. This is all the truer for us here in Amarillo. After all, Texas is the America of America, and West Texas is the Texas of Texas. We want to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps.

But Jesus has called us not to be independent-minded West Texans or Americans. He has called us to be his dependent disciples. He has called us to pray that God’s kingdom would come. He has called us to long for the rule and reign of a righteous King in our lives and in our world. So, for the rest of our time today, I want to spend some time unpacking what it means to pray for the kingdom of God and why it is such good news. We’re going to talk about **1.) The Need for the Kingdom of God, 2.) The Call of the Kingdom of God, and 3.) The Hope of the Kingdom of God.**

1.) The Need for the Kingdom of God.

I think there are two major ways that we avoid seeing our need for the kingdom of God. The first is that we simply ignore our need for the kingdom. With the Internet and twenty-four-hour news cycle, it has never been easier to be well informed of the brokenness and pain in the world. But conversely, even though we have the opportunity to be better informed, we are also a very distracted people. We overcommit our schedules with busyness, we use our smart phones to distract us from ever thinking deeply, and we sedate ourselves with entertainment. We know just enough about the woes of the world to be anxious, but rather than taking our cares to God in prayer, we tend to cover up our fear with activity and distraction.

Another way we avoid seeing our need for the kingdom is that we engage in a thousand different *self-salvation projects*. Individually, we try to control our lives through time-management strategies, diets, and self-help techniques. Corporately, we devote our passions and imaginations to politics as a way to seek a form of self-salvation in the kingdom of man.

Now, it is not bad to be a responsible person. It’s not bad to be civically informed and engaged. But if we think that we can control every aspect of our lives so as to remove all suffering, or if we think that politics is the answer to all the world’s problems, we will never look beyond ourselves for real salvation.

In teaching us to pray, Jesus calls us to step outside of a human-centered worldview so that we might understand our need for God and his kingdom in our lives.

In order for us to really understand our need for the kingdom of God, I think it may be helpful to talk about how the Jewish people during Jesus’s life understood their need for the kingdom of God. In the story of the Old Testament, God had a chosen people named Israel. After the whole of the human race fell into sin and corruption, God called this nation of slaves to be his people. He delivered them from

² R.C. Sproul, *The Prayer of the Lord*. (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009), 40-41.

bondage. He led them into a Promised Land. He dwelled among them in a Temple. And he gave them a kingdom.

Sadly, rather than faithfully serving this God, the people of Israel chose to follow the ways of the nations around them. They fell into darkness, and as a consequence, they were divided and conquered. Again, they found themselves under the oppression of tyrants. That should have been the end of the Jewish people, except for the fact that God had made a promise to them that they would be his forever. So, they began to hope that God would one day rescue them from tyranny. The prophets began to speak of a day that would come when God would again defeat Israel's enemies and bring forth justice for God's people.

But then the word of God stopped. For four hundred years, there was silence from heaven. The kingdom of Babylon rose and fell. The kingdom of Persia rose and fell. The kingdom of Greece rose and fell. And now, a new kingdom named Rome rose and ruled over the Jewish people. But still, God's people remembered that even though they were in exile, they were set apart as God's people. Still, they yearned for the day God would save them out of their brokenness.

This is why it was such a profound moment when Jesus stepped out of the wilderness and began to say, **"The kingdom of God is at hand!" (Mk 1:15)**. This was truly good news. It meant that God was intervening in creation on behalf of his people. It meant that God was going to personally take on the powers of evil. It meant that redemption and deliverance were just around the corner.

In order for us to understand our need for the kingdom, we need to understand what the Jews understood. Number one: although we are God's people, we are in a world that is not our home; we are a people in exile. Number two: there is something broken in us and in our world that we cannot fix in our own strength. When we know and believe these things to be true, we will understand our need for the kingdom of God. And we will pray for God to just do that.

Thus, when we pray for the kingdom of God to come, we are praying for divine intervention into history. We are looking head-on at our heartbreak, our disappointments, and our pain, and bring those things to God. We are simultaneously refusing to ignore the brokenness of creation as well as refusing to believe that we can fix the world in our own strength. We are acknowledging that true salvation cannot come from the kingdom of man. Rather, we are praying for God to take all that is evil and broken and to redeem it for our good and his glory. This is the *need* for God's kingdom.

2.) The Call of the Kingdom of God.

Ever since the creation of men and women in the book of Genesis, God has desired to partner with people to bring about his purposes in the earth. Even though he creates the heavens and the earth by the power of his word, he wants to partner with Adam by having Adam name the animals. Later, after Jesus Christ accomplishes our redemption through his life, death, and resurrection, he then entrusts the proclamation of that message to his people, the church. Likewise, *the kingdom of God is not just a benefit that God's people receive; it is a mission to be fulfilled*. We can't bring about God's kingdom by ourselves, but God does desire to bring about his kingdom in and through our lives.

Thus, when we are "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," one of the things we are praying is this: **"God, begin with me! Let your Holy Spirit have dominion over every action of my body, every word of my mouth, every thought of my mind, and every motive of my heart!"**

Likewise, we are praying for God to bring our desires in alignment with his desires. With this phrase,

“your will be done,” Jesus teaching us something fascinating about the nature of Christian prayer. By praying “your will be done,” we are not attempting to bend God’s desires to fit our will. Rather we are pleading for the Lord to bend our desires to fit his will.³ Like Augustine of Hippo, we pray, *“Lord, command what you will, and will what you command.”*

But how is it that we are to know the will of God? Every Jew in Jesus’s day would have known exactly how to answer that question: the will of God is revealed by the word of God. Thus, yet again, we see how in teaching us to pray, Jesus is calling us to the word of God so that the word of God can teach us how to pray.

This is why I think that the very best way to learn how to pray is to begin by praying the Scriptures, particularly the Psalms. One great way to learn the language of prayer is to find a psalm that matches your situation, and pray it from your heart.

We learn to pray like we learn to speak – we are first spoken to. Like a toddler who learns her first syllables slowly from being immersed in words from her mom and dad, we learn the language of prayer by listening to what God has spoken to us in his word.⁴

Make this your habit: pray God’s word. Listen to God’s word. Receive God’s word and will as a gift. And then, in a posture of humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit, seek to do God’s word in and with the community of God’s people the church. So, I encourage you, in the coming week pray, *“Lord, help me to know your will through your word. Help our church to know your will through your word. Help your people display your kingdom in and through our lives.”*

3.) The Hope of the Kingdom of God.

Through Jesus, the reign of God has intervened in history. As God’s people, we are called to pray for and partner with God in displaying his kingdom here and now. But the truth remains that evil is still active in this world. There is still brokenness and heartache that we mourn. Thus, when we pray for the kingdom to come, we are praying for the day when God’s kingdom will come in fullness.

This vision for the future is what helps us to understand what Jesus was actually doing when he performed miracles. When Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, he did not simply talk about it. He moved in power. He healed the sick. He delivered people from the power of demons. He fed the hungry. He even commanded the dead to rise.

These were not random displays of power or magic tricks. Rather, these were signposts pointing toward a future when God will end all sickness, bondage, pain, and death. This is the unshakeable hope of all those who believe.

In this way, the ending vision of the book of Revelation is the ultimate answer to the prayer “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” This is Revelation 21: *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and*

³ J.I. Packer, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007, 57-58.

⁴ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angels: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. Quoted in Timothy Keller *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. (New York: Dutton, 2014), 55.

death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:1-4).

This is the end of our story. The hope of the Bible isn't just for us to go to heaven; it is that one day, heaven will come to earth! So, I want to continue to challenge all of us to commit at least some time to prayer every day in the coming week. And when you pray, consider adding to your prayers, *“Lord, fill my heart with hope for the day when your kingdom comes in fullness, and help me live my life in light of that hope!”*

Conclusion

This promise is what will give us hope and comfort when we experience suffering and brokenness, not just in creation in general, but in our own lives. When our temporary hopes are shattered by heartache, when our worst fears come into existence, when it seems our will and God's will are not the same, we are comforted that there is a day coming when God will bring forth our justice and wipe away every tear. More than that, we are comforted that we serve a God who knows what suffering feels like.

Jesus didn't just teach us to pray, “your will be done.” He prayed it himself. On the night he was arrested, Jesus took his disciples to a garden called Gethsemane, where he prayed and prepared for the horror of the cross. He prayed that if there was any way that he could save us without having to die, that God would make it so. But nevertheless, he prayed to God, *“not my will but yours be done”* (Mt 26:39, 42). In this moment, he submitted himself to die the death that we deserve for our sin so that we can have eternal life in God.

But it is precisely because Jesus submitted himself to the judgment of God that one day, he will be given the authority to judge the nations. It is because he died and rose again to defeat the power of evil that we can have the hope that a reign of justice is coming. *It is because of the accomplishment of our righteous King that we have the hope that his kingdom is near.*

So, Redeemer Christian Church, as the people of God, let us be awakened to the good news of God's kingdom. Let his kingdom come in our lives. Let his kingdom give hope to our hearts.

AMEN.

Discussion Starters for Gospel Communities:

- 1) *How might American culture predispose us against the notion of praying for a “kingdom” to come in our lives? Why, nonetheless, is God's kingdom such good news?*
- 2) *In praying for God's will to be done, how should we view the role the Scripture plays in helping us discern the will of God in our lives? What role should the Bible play in our daily prayer lives?*
- 3) *How is the prayer “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10) a prayer that should stir us to hope for the return of Christ (see Rev. 21-22)?*