

Your Kingdom Come — Matthew 6:10

Five Points Community Church (3/13/16) Brett Toney

The Kingdom of Heaven is Like

Soil. Mixed seed. Mustard. Leaven. Hidden treasure. A pearl. A fishing net. A master of a house. These would make for an odd list of prayer requests, but Jesus teaches us to pray that something like these might come. In the second petition that our Lord teaches us to pray, he says that we ought to ask our Father in heaven, “Your kingdom come.” It is later on in Matthew’s Gospel that Jesus employs the parables to explain what this kingdom is like. The kingdom needs explanation, because it is not what we expect. Our heavenly Father’s kingdom is not like anything we would anticipate on our own. His kingdom far surpasses anything we might conclude a kingdom of such a sovereign Father might be like. Just try to recall for a moment how Pastor JJ has expounded on who God is as Father and who God is as the one who reigns from Heaven with meticulous sovereignty. Recall who our Sovereign Father is as the one whose name *will be* glorified on earth just as it is in Heaven. Now try to consider what that God’s kingdom is like. It must be expansive, majestic, awe-inspiring, all-surpassing. His kingdom—the carrying out of his heavenly reign and rule—must be all-encompassing, flawless in its administration and execution, the chief display of perfect governance.

This is a massive prayer request. “O God, you are the greatest king imaginable as you reign supremely from Heaven. May your kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven.” This prayer request is deeply rooted in redemptive history. This request is profoundly and presently relational. And this monumental request is intensely anticipatory. In teaching us to pray, “Your kingdom come,” Jesus continues to teach us to pray according to God’s will, joining in with his perfect purposes and intentions.

Your Kingdom Come *in the Past*

Now, confusion can come with praying for the kingdom of God because we don't necessarily think of this request in its rich redemptive historical context. The idea of "kingdom" is a significant theme in Scripture and has been suggested by many to be perhaps *the* unifying theme of the story of the Bible. As we mark Palm Sunday next week, we know Jesus' disciples and many Jews in Jesus' day were confused about his kingship. In the Gospels we read how there was a right expectation of a king, but when he appeared his kingdom was not in line with that expectation. It was necessary for Jesus to speak of the kingdom of God in parables to help clarify the nature of this kingdom.

But where does this expectation come from? We're going to look at a few passages of Scripture that demonstrate how this petition—"your kingdom comes"—aligns with the development of that expectation and, more importantly, demonstrate how this petition aligns with the very purpose of God in creation. We'll have them up on the screen or you can follow along in your Bible.

First, Genesis 1:27-28:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and *have dominion* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

We see in this foundational passage God's design for his newly created image bearers—humanity is to display God's kingly reign by exercising dominion over the whole creation. Adam and Eve were king and queen, God's appointed representatives on earth to reign on his behalf. They were to have image-bearing babies that would fill the earth, so that this world would be full of mirrored displays of what God's sovereign reign is like. Adam especially was designed by

God to communicate what our Father in Heaven is like as he himself was a father and a husband. Adam was commissioned to work and keep the Garden (2:15), seeing to it that dominion was properly being exercised. But he failed, rebelling against the Ruler and leading the creation into exile.

Yet this fit into the foreordained plans and purposes of God, which continued as he set out to redeem a people who would rightly make his sovereign reign known. In Genesis 17:5-8, we read of the covenant God made with Abraham:

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a *multitude of nations*. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into *nations*, and *kings* shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.

Kings and kingdoms would come through the line and covenant of Abraham. A people for God's own possession who would be restored to reigning in God's place. God's kingdom would come through the offspring of this man.

Centuries later, God made another promise, another covenant. To a descendant of Abraham, God guaranteed the coming of his kingdom. In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God speaks to King David, "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his *kingdom*. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the *throne of his kingdom forever*." An eternal king would be given for an eternal kingdom. One to reign where Adam failed.

And in the midst of a national tragedy as God's people experienced exile yet again, the prophet Ezekiel spoke a word of hope, a word of a restored kingdom—Ezekiel 37:23-24, “I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David shall be *king* over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.” What Ezekiel is saying in chapter 37 is that God was going to bring together the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah that had been separated so many years before. He would make them one nation, one kingdom, with one Davidic king to reign over them. This was the hope—a king and kingdom—this was the hope God's people clung to for centuries as they waited for the fulfillment of the promise made to David, made to Abraham.

So it should now come as no surprise that the opening words of the New Testament are, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). Matthew is not just recording a family history here. He's making a statement, “Long live the King! Here he is! The one God's people have been waiting for and looking for is now here! Here is the one who will reflect God's heavenly reign on earth where Adam failed.”

Your Kingdom Come *in the Present*

This theme of “kingdom” continues throughout Matthew's Gospel. The narrative of Jesus' birth in chapter two presents Jesus as the newborn king. That's why eastern kings bring royal gifts, and Herod feels so threatened. The first words we hear out of the mouth of John the Baptist *and Jesus* are the same, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2, 4:17). Or more literally, they both are proclaiming the kingdom “*has come* near.” The kingdom of God in Heaven is breaking in to the present reality on earth through the person and work of Jesus, the Son of Promise, the Heir to David's throne. Jesus makes this all the clearer in 12:28 when he

responds to the Pharisees' blasphemy saying, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the *kingdom of God has come upon you.*" His point is clear; the heavenly kingdom of God is a present earthly reality. And if there is any confusion as to who the king of this kingdom is, Matthew concludes his Gospel with Jesus proclaiming, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*" (28:18). The one who died, was buried, and rose again is the very one seated on the throne reigning over all things. From beginning to end, the Gospel of Matthew is communicating the culmination of redemptive history has come in the present reign and rule of King Jesus over the heaven-on-earth kingdom of God.

And so Jesus teaches us to pray, "Heavenly Father, your kingdom come." He is teaching us to pray in line with God's very intended purposes and will for creation. When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we are praying for the very thing God is doing. We are praying for the very thing he will ensure comes about. There is contention, however, over the nature of this kingdom. Some argue that God's kingdom is strictly his sovereign reign over the spiritual realm. Others say it is the present, temporal alleviation of suffering, the elimination of poverty and illness. Still others say it is just God's future earthly reign after the Second Coming of Christ. I think it best to understand that the kingdom of God is none of those ... and all of those.

I think it best to understand the kingdom of God is not a *place* but the carrying out of his kingly reign. When we pray, "Your kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven," we are praying that God's sovereignty would be on clear display on earth. As we have seen, this is the very thing God is after as he intends humanity to exercise dominion in all the world. And where humanity tragically failed, Jesus wonderfully succeeded. So God's kingdom *is* his sovereign reign over the spiritual realm, but that reign has broken into history in the person and work of Jesus. And the earthly ministry of Jesus was absolutely characterized by the alleviation of temporal suffering.

But as we have seen, when Jesus invoked his supreme authority, the thing he commissioned his disciples to do was *not* eliminating poverty *nor* ending hunger. It wasn't being rid of illiteracy and *not even* fighting for the pre-born. And it certainly was not electing the "most Christian" president. The thing Jesus' followers are to give themselves to in the name and authority of the sovereign, risen King is *to make disciples*.

It is *through the Church* that God's kingly, heavenly reign is made known on earth. That's why I said to pray, "Your kingdom come," is profoundly and presently relational. It is through the present ministry of the Church in making disciples that God's kingship is communicated. Christians are subjects of the King who live according to his decrees and proclaim the good news about his kingdom. That good news is that humanity is enslaved in a kingdom of darkness, but the Spirit of God can free you from your chains and transfer you to the kingdom of the beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13). And when that happens, Christians baptize new Christians into the Triune community of Father, Son, and Spirit. And the act of discipleship—the act of advancing the kingdom—*continues* relationally. For we do not make disciples merely by teaching them of the King's decrees. We make disciples by teaching them *to observe* all that he commanded. Discipleship requires life application. Discipleship requires knowing and being known. Discipleship requires showing how you actually live according to the King's commands.

So if it is through the Church that God's kingly, heavenly reign is presently made known on earth through our mission of making disciples, we must ask ourselves *whose* kingdom we are truly seeking to advance. Do we pray, "Your kingdom come," and then get up from our knees and live, "My kingdom come"? *Whose* kingdom are we seeking to advance? Because when things don't go according to my plans, and I get angry, I am seeking *my* kingdom. When I spend

the tax refund before it's even in the bank account, I am seeking *my* kingdom. When I fill my life and schedule with so many activities and functions that I don't even have energy to invest in my kids or my neighbor, I am seeking *my* kingdom. For us to pray, "Your kingdom come," it will require that our priorities come into alignment with that very petition. This prayer will shape how we use our money and time, and what we give them to. If the King has entrusted these resources to us, and his chief objective in creation and redemptive history is for his kingdom to come on earth as it is in Heaven, how will we spend our money and our time? Even as subjects of the king, we are bent on advancing *our* kingdoms.

Paul Tripp helps us in reorienting us from our kingdom to God's. He writes, "You see, the biggest protection against the kingdom of self is not a set of self-reformative defensive strategies. It's a heart that's so blown away by the right-here, right-now glories of the grace of Jesus Christ that you're not easily seduced by the lesser, temporary glories of that claustrophobic kingdom of one, the kingdom of self."¹ Let me repeat that. ... As a disciple of Jesus, a subject of the King, we ought to be consumed with the incredible, present wonders of being redeemed by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Doing so will keep us on point, on mission. Doing so will equip us to pray *and live*, "Your kingdom come."

Your Kingdom Come *in the Future*

The kingdom of God is already here; the kingdom of God *has* come near. But there is a dynamic of the kingdom that is still yet to come. The kingdom of God is "already but not yet." It has been inaugurated through the first coming of Christ, but it will be consummated at his Second Coming. This is where much of the confusion came in for the disciples and Jews of Jesus' day. They were looking for a present kingdom only. There were ready for Jesus to

¹ Paul Tripp, "Whose Kingdom?", <http://www.paultripp.com/articles/posts/whose-kingdom>

triumphantly enter Jerusalem and oust Rome. Many of the parables of the kingdom try to communicate that there is still yet a future, complete expression of the kingdom that we ought to look for and yearn for. So the petition at hand takes into account the fulfillment of historical anticipation, and it calls for God's present activity through the Church to advance. But this monumental request is also intensely anticipatory.

The future dynamic of "your kingdom come" captures the reality that our present experience is not fully what God intends. There is a sense in which the way things are now is not the way things ought to be. Yes, under the perfect, meticulous sovereignty of God the present situation of this world is exactly as God ordained. But he isn't finished. So this petition is echoed in, "Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!" Yes, we worship a crucified King. But he is a king who cannot be conquered, for death could not hold him. The grave could not keep him. Our Lord is risen with all authority in heaven and on earth. He has ascended on high to resume his rightful place at the right hand of our Father in heaven. And there he sits, having completed his work for all time, reigning over all things. But there is a day yet coming when he will stand and return to establish forever the kingdom that has been given to him. And on that day, our petition will meet perfection. His kingdom will come on earth just as it is in heaven.

No longer will we pray this prayer. We will have no need to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven," because on that day "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" (Revelation 21:3). No longer will we pray, "Hallowed be your name," because there will be "no need of sun or moon to shine ... for the glory of God gives it light" (Revelation 21:23). No longer will we pray, "Your kingdom come," because all will be accomplished and completed.

Is that the kingdom you desire? Is that the kingdom you are giving your life to advance? This model prayer the Lord taught us to pray is beautiful. It is loaded with meaning. But we can so easily pray these words in vain. We can gloss over them in pseudo-spirituality and do the very thing Jesus denounces in the introduction to this prayer. He said, “When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words” (6:7). This prayer isn’t magic. Our desires, our lives must match with our petitions. Let me close with an exhortation from J.C. Ryle, an Anglican bishop from the 19th century. He wrote, “Let us examine ourselves and see whether we really have the desire to have the things which we are taught to ask for in the Lord’s prayer. Thousands repeat the form without considering what they say.”²

² J.C. Ryle (compiled by Robert Sheehan), “Morning: March 11,” *Daily Readings from All Four Gospels* (EP Books: Grand Rapids, 2015).