

## ***A Journey Through The Lord's Prayer***

### ***"Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done"***

[Matthew 6:9-13](#)

We are on the third Sunday of our journey through the Lord's Prayer." Most of us know by heart this prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray; yet honestly speaking, many of us do not know what we are really praying for when we pray it. And so, through this sermon series, we seek to better understand this model prayer that Jesus gave us and to grow deeper in our prayer life. I hope that this simple prayer of Jesus will change us and reshape our lives as we continue on our special spiritual journey this summer.

After examining the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer last Sunday, we come to its second sentence. Shall we say it together? "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Before going further, I would like to acknowledge that this reflection was inspired by Darrell W. Johnson's book, *Fifty-Seven Words That Change the World*.

I believe this short sentence, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," best summarizes the life and ministry of Jesus. If you recall, "The kingdom of God is at hand," were among the first words Jesus preached, and "not what I will but what you will." were among the last words Jesus prayed to God before he was arrested by Roman soldiers in the garden of Gethsemane.

Throughout his entire ministry, Jesus constantly proclaimed the kingdom of God and sought to do God's will. So, understanding this sentence that Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," is crucial for understanding what he was trying to accomplish in his ministry, what he was teaching, what he was doing when he died on the cross and rose from the grave.

Now, let's look at the first phrase, "Thy kingdom come." What are we praying when we say, "Thy kingdom come?" As you know, the first word, "Thy" is an old English word for "your." The natural tendency in our lives is to focus on us and on our own needs. And it is the same way in our prayer lives. We tend to center our prayers on ourselves, filling them with our needs and wants.

However, the Lord's Prayer takes our attention away from us. It takes our focus away from what we want and turns it back to God and what God wants. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," we are reminding ourselves that the world does not revolve around us; we are letting go of our natural tendency to make everything all about us; we are repenting of our sins of selfishness and self-centeredness and resolving to seek first God's kingdom and God's will.

But what does it mean to pray for God's kingdom to come? What did Jesus mean exactly by the kingdom of God that he was praying for?

Jewish people in Jesus' time held a unique view of time and history. They believed time was linear, and that history kept moving forward, like an arrow. God was actively present in history and was moving history toward its end, called "the day of the Lord." At the end time was to be the kingdom of God, where God would rule as the king over the entire world without rival and where all of God's creation would be restored to God's original design in a new heavens and a new earth. In the reign of God, there was to be no more suffering and pain, no more crying and weeping.

Hear the vision of the kingdom of God from the Prophet Isaiah, "The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but the dust will be serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my [God's] holy mountain" (Isaiah 66:25). And, this reign of God was to be ushered in by God's anointed one, the Messiah. It was in this context and worldview that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

As mentioned earlier, the kingdom of God was at the heart of Jesus' teaching throughout his ministry. "The kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven" appears several dozen times in the gospels. Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." (Mark 1:15) He announced that the kingdom of God, the future reign of God spoken of by the prophets had now broken into history because of him. The new order of life, the restoration of God's good creation, was already begun in Jesus. And, his ministry was a demonstration of the future kingdom of God already happening in the midst of the disciples. In the here and now. Here are some images of God's kingdom manifest in Jesus' life and ministry.

Jesus gives sight to the blind. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus makes the lame to walk. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus heals those who were suffering from mental illness. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus heals lepers. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus heals a bent-over woman ignored by others. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus calms the stormy wind and water. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus feeds the hungry. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus stands with the poor and powerless. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus reaches out to the Samaritan woman, and she becomes an evangelist. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus includes women in his ministry, going against his culture. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus welcomes and blesses children. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus hangs out with the so-called sinners. That's the kingdom of God!

Jesus saves a woman caught in adultery, risking his own reputation. That's the kingdom of God!

Jesus calls Zacchaeus, and the corrupt tax collector repents of his sins and turns away from his past. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus calls the ordinary, the least likely persons to be his disciples. That's the kingdom of God! "Jesus unites people the world divides. In his company are Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector, two arch enemies. One represents an oppressive foreign government; the other, a revolutionary insurgency - he's a terrorist." (p.47) Jesus forgives his disciples who betray him. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. That's the kingdom of God! Jesus himself rises from the dead. That's the kingdom of God!

Throughout Jesus' life and ministry, the kingdom of God, the new order of life, the restoration of God's good creation, was breaking into the present from the future. But, many times, Jesus also said that the kingdom of God had yet to come. The kingdom of God is both here and the kingdom of God is yet to

come. In other words, the kingdom of God is a work in progress. The kingdom of God that was begun in the life and ministry of Jesus continues to grow and spread in and through the lives of his followers.

As it was in Jesus' time, as it has been throughout history, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven breaks into the present when we act with justice, when we love tenderly, when we serve one another, and when we walk humbly with God, as the prophet Micah envisioned long ago. The kingdom of heaven breaks into our world today when we act with compassion and kindness, when we show mercy to those who live in fear and give hope to the hopeless. It breaks into our world when we sacrifice ourselves for others. Through our willingness to follow Jesus Christ, we get a taste of the kingdom of God that is forever breaking into our present time, the here and now. The kingdom of God needs our yes. It needs our participation.

Jesus said there are many signs of the coming of the kingdom of God, yet they are hidden, like a treasure buried in the field, and they are revealed only to those who open their eyes to see them. When we repent, when we change the way we think, when we experience a change of heart, our eyes are opened and see the signs of God's kingdom already present in our lives and all around us in the world.

Do you see them? Do you hear those signs of God's kingdom being fulfilled on earth as it is in heaven? I do in so many places in our church and in the world, and one of those places where the signs of God's kingdom were strongly present was right here during VBS last week. I saw them on the happy faces of the volunteers, both youth and adults, who showed up every morning with great enthusiasm. I heard them in the joyful noises of children all over the church campus. And, today, I will see them in the Fireside Room, where volunteers will work on making ponchos for the homeless after the worship service. Some of our church family will carry with them the signs of God's kingdom to Los Gatos and San Francisco, as they participate in the CROP Hunger Walk or in the Pride Parade this afternoon. The kingdom of God that has begun in Jesus will continue to grow through the work of his followers. Signs of God's kingdom will spread to everywhere they go with God's love.

Now, the next phrase: "Thy will be done." The story of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden tells us how strong our wills are. God told them they could eat all the fruits from any tree in the garden except from one tree. They were told they would die if they broke this one rule. But, they went ahead and ate from the forbidden tree... We want to do things our own way and according to our own will. No one wants to be told what to do and what not to do. We want to be in control.

But, when we pray "Thy will be done," we are saying the prayer Jesus prayed at Gethsemane, "Not my will but thy will be done." Do you see it? The first Adam said to God through his act of disobedience, "Not your will, but my will." But, Jesus, the second Adam said to God in his prayer of surrender, "Not my will, but your will." In a different garden but faced with the same temptation to assert control, Jesus shows us the way. In the spirit of this prayer of Jesus, John Wesley wrote this covenant prayer:

I am no longer my own, but thine.  
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.  
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.  
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,

Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.  
Let me be full, let me be empty.  
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.  
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

This way of surrender is difficult. Our natural tendency like the first Adam is to have it our way, to have the world conform to our will. You may even find surrendering your need for control impossible. Do not worry. There is hope for us. We are praying for God's kingdom to come not only into the world but into our hearts. We are inviting the Holy Spirit to work in us, to give us hearts of flesh, which will enable us to follow in the way of Jesus Christ, the way of humble obedience to God.

Would you pray the second verse of the Lord's prayer with me now? "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Would you commit to continuing to pray the Lord's Prayer throughout this week, once in the morning and once in the evening, giving special attention to the second verse we have reflected on this morning? May the Holy Spirit give you the eyes and ears to see the kingdom of God already in our midst. May the Holy Spirit empower you to say yes to participating in God's ongoing work of restoration. And may the Holy Spirit enable you to follow in the humble, obedient way of Jesus Christ, who leads us into life.