

First Presbyterian Church
Mt. 6:10, Thy Kingdom Come
by Pastor Matt Johnson, 10/8/2017

Our journey so far has focused on one simple line in Jesus' prayer,
"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

With that line, Jesus has included us in his own relationship
with God the Father and he has told us that God has both
the will and the ability to respond to our prayer.
Most amazing of all, we aren't telling God what we're going to do for him—
we are telling God to do what only he can do.

We're saying,
"God, *you* hallow your name.
You put your reputation on display right here in our world,
because we can't do that."

Today we continue in this prayer with these lines:
**Your Kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

I want us to start by looking at this phrase,
"On earth as it is in heaven."

As Dale Bruner and others see it,
this line comes at the center of the prayer for a reason.
It's the intended conclusion to each of the first three petitions,
and it displays the essence of the prayer as a whole:

Our Father in Heaven--
Hallow your name (on earth as in heaven)
Bring your Kingdom (on earth as in heaven)
Do your will (on earth as in heaven)
See how that connects those all together?

Jesus teaches us to pray this way
because God wants to display his rule
just as completely on earth as it is displayed in heaven.

Is there any way that *we* can make that happen?

No—these are things that only God can do.
Praying in the pattern Jesus teaches puts our overall focus
on *God and God's activity*
rather than on us and our activity.

If you take just that aspect of the Lord's Prayer—being focused on God—
and bring it into your own prayer life,
you'll be amazed at how differently you pray.

Because for most of us, prayer typically begins with us:
our activities, our families, our problems, our needs.
Jesus wants us to pray for those things,
and he tells us to pray for those things,
but Jesus doesn't *begin* with those things.

He teaches us to begin with God and God's activities.

Preoccupation with the self
is a central sin in Western society, and we are not exempt from it.

As a result, we are especially likely to miss this point in the prayer,
it just slides over us without sufficient comprehension.

“Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

True or False: Everything in heaven is exactly the way God wants it.
[True!]

In terms of this prayer Jesus teaches us,
God's name, God's Kingly rule, and God's will
are fully on display in heaven.

Next question:

Is it possible for these things to be on display on earth as they are in heaven?

Jesus teaches us to pray that it would be so.

Which is why the Sermon on the Mount

(which this prayer is in the middle of)

teaches us things that sound very strange:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, love your enemies,

don't swear by anything but simply tell people

“yes” or “no,”

do good things secretly so your Father in heaven will reward you.

We don't think or act in those ways because

we live on earth as it is on earth.

But Jesus is pointing to a different way of life—

life on earth as it is in heaven.

This has to do with ordinary life for all of us.

When we pray this prayer,

we're asking God to open up heaven to us

in normal circumstances,

not only through miraculous encounters.

We don't have to wait to experience that kind of life,

the future can spill into the present,

heaven can break into earth.

Which is exactly why Jesus tells us to pray, **“Your Kingdom come.”**

Your Kingdom come.

Or, as we learned last week, “Come, your Kingdom.”

We're praying, “God, you're the one in heaven,

you bring your Kingdom on earth.”

When we look to the rest of the Bible,

we find out this means different things in different places.

In one sense “your Kingdom come” means we're asking God

to permanently display his kingly rule on earth,

for everything to be made right, for justice to be done,

for all the wrongly ordered relationships
that emerge from our sinfulness to be set right again.
We're asking to never have to deal with another mass shooting,
to not have to worry about nuclear war.

This is what Jesus himself refers to when he says in Luke 22:18,
**“I tell you the truth,
I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine
until the Kingdom of God comes.”**

So in that sense we're praying that Jesus would
physically return and bring about the final restoration of all things,
something that hasn't happened yet.

But that's not the only thing we find.
We also find the Lord saying in Psalm 2
that he has established his King on Mt. Zion.
This refers to a King bigger than David,
a Messiah King of whom Yahweh says, “You are my Son.”

The early Christians took that Psalm to mean that Jesus is already the King.
And we find that in the Gospels, King Jesus tells us
that the Kingdom of God has already come in him.

So when he heals the blind and the lame—
that's the Kingdom of God already here.
When he eats with sinners
and welcomes them into what God is doing,
that's the Kingdom of God already here.
When he tell a parable of a mustard seed
that starts small and grows into a large tree
that all the birds of the air find rest in,
that's a parable about the Kingdom of God already here.
When we confess wrongdoing to one another and offer forgiveness,
that's the Kingdom of God already here.
When we are changed by study and prayer, and offer worship to God,
that's the Kingdom of God already here.
When we love our neighbors, that's the Kingdom of God already here.

So we can pray for both things at once:

God, send Jesus back again and bring your Kingdom,
but in the meantime, keep on revealing
the ways that your Kingdom is already here.

Darrell Johnson helps me understand this a bit deeper
by pointing out that the distinction between these two is not,
“Partial” and “Complete.”

It’s not quite right to say that God’s rule is only partially here,
but one day it will be completely here. He writes,

**“Jesus Christ is not partially here.
He is already completely here.**

But he is here in *hidden* form.

**He is *veiled*, or as I should say, ordinarily veiled.
Jesus Christ is at hand, just behind that thin,
permeable veil of hiddenness.**

**If God wanted to, he could pull back that veil
and we would all be on our knees.”** End quote.

That’s why it’s not crazy for us to ask God
to bring his way of life into our life.

Because the Kingdom doesn’t come from far away,
God merely pulls back the veil
to reveal what has been true on earth all along.

*ASIDE: Shows why we shouldn’t talk about
“Building the Kingdom of God.”*

Jesus also teaches us to pray like this:

**Your Kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.**

When we pray this we are telling God that his will is the best.

Now that’s problematic for us,
because we also have wills.

We also think we know what is best—

if we didn’t think that, we’d change our opinion
to think something else was best!

But here we're saying that God's will is the best,
and he must accomplish it.

On its own, my will gets things twisted up.
But when I prayerfully consider where God is at work in the world,
I start to realize that God's will
is what I really wanted all along.

God gave us our own free will, and it's a good thing.
What I learn here is that my will
is at its best when aligned with God's will.

Take a look at this photograph: (SHOW PICTURE ON SCREEN).



That is what one child did when he decided to bake a cake.
He had a will to make a cake.
He took some toys, put them in a plastic container,
turned on the oven, and he “baked a cake.”
How's that workin' for ya?
Now this kid's mom probably loves to bake cakes—
it's part of her will for there to be cakes made at home.
That's how the kid got the idea in the first place.
It's not a bad idea.
But only his mom could accomplish that.
She could have invited her son
to help in some ways in accomplishing her will,
but apart from her will, the kid could do some damage.

Sometimes that's what we do.

We set up a goal or vision for ourselves – which is a good vision –
but we try to control all the variables and outcomes
ourselves, and we forget to look to God.

We forget to ask, “Is this what you want, too?
And if so, how, when, and where?”

I've come to realize this within the church.

As a pastor, part of my job is to have a vision for the church,
and I get lots of opportunities to share that vision
with all of you.

But when I let my will become my primary focus,
then I try to work at making the church
conform to my vision.

It's a subtle thing, but that's not really my job.

My job is to love the church as it is,
to help develop a clear vision with the elders,
*and then leave the transformation of the church
in God's hands through the Spirit at work
within all of you.*

Put another way, before we ask God to give us what we want,
we have to ask to be given what God wants,
and that's what the Lord's prayer does.

If the fulfillment of God's will also leads to those things we want,
we'll be the happiest people on earth.

If it doesn't lead to those things,
we will still be so much better off than if we forced the issue.

God hallows his name. God brings his Kingdom. God does his will.
And he can do it on earth as it is in heaven.