

Your Kingdom Come!

(2nd week in a sermon series on the Lord's Prayer)

Matthew 6: 5-15; Matthew 6: 25-34

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What does it mean: Your (Thy) Kingdom Come? Jesus means just as Jesus states it. It is God's Kingdom that makes the difference in our world – not a human Kingdom. Jesus adds to this line: 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' When we pray to God for God's Kingdom to come forth, it naturally follows that my ego's motivation, my greed, what I want, comes behind what God wants.

Last week we spoke about how we are all related as God's loved children. The Father metaphor for God means we are all loved by God as a Father loves His children but even more so with God because God is without fault or without sin. A Father's love indicates a strong relationship or bond. Unlike the common understanding of deities at the time of Jesus, God did not desire to be an aloof God who displayed his kingdom with power and who held the people in fear of punishment if they did not obey. Rather, we see a God who desires a trusting relationship with his children, and desires the best for his family. God desires that we work alongside Him to bring in the Kingdom of love and peace.

The Face of God: Let's consider who is teaching the prayer. Jesus is the human face of God who teaches this prayer from God's perspective. Theologian Richard Rohr has commented on how the first 1,000 years after Christ, the emphasis of the church was on proving the divinity of Christ. In the 12th Century St. Francis came along and was said to have created the first nativity scene. I understand that before the 13th century, Christmas was not a big deal. The emphasis was more on the Holy days of Easter. Easter is certainly the highest point of the church year. However, at the same time, the relative unimportance of Christmas was surprising. For Francis, however, the birth of Christ was already redemptive. That fact that God was born in such a lowly place among the animals meant that it is good to be human, to be in the flesh, and that God chose to be with those he loves.

In Jesus, God the Father has been given a face and a heart. For example, while God could be described as a moral force, a huge energy, a consciousness, the difficulty is that we do not fall in love with an idea or an abstraction. We also do not fall in love with laws. Jesus became someone we could see, touch, and hear. What Christ did for his children in laying aside his majesty to be 'Immanuel, God with us' in human form is a gift for us to comprehend that his nature, his whole being is love. When the face of God who put himself aside for you is encountered in the physical, it leads to transformation of our whole selves.

Jesus publicly displaying the nature of his Kingdom: Close to the end of his ministry Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Here is the old testament scripture from Zechariah 9: 9-10 prophesying the coming King (Jesus): **"See your King is coming to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."**

We remember from this account that Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem on a war horse but on a donkey. A donkey was symbolized as an animal of peace. We then ask, what kind of King was Jesus? At worship on Palm Sunday we quote Zechariah 9 and we understand that Jesus is a righteous and victorious king – not a king who goes to war. Furthermore, verse 10 says that our righteous king, Jesus, goes a step further where he removes weapons of war and proclaims peace to the nations. His kingdom is sustainable because it brings peace and eternal love. Jesus went against the culture and thinking of the day of power. Jesus Christ is the victorious king overall because his Kingdom is not rooted in self-preservation or greed but in grace (unconditional love).

My Kingdom Go: Jesus announced and lived, a new social order which was an alternative to the violence and exclusion of the day. Jesus promised something new and not something out of reach - a real achievable peace by God's grace. Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God at the start of his ministry as read in Luke 4: 14-30, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and in most of his parables. In fact, the Kingdom of God is the prominent, guiding image in Jesus' entire ministry. Most Christians can easily say "Thy kingdom come," but it has little effect on one's life unless they also say "My kingdom go."

When we say `thy Kingdom Come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven`, it means going against the nature of our culture, a culture where we are encouraged to build our own kingdom of greed and consumerism. Since we are products of our culture, the values of the culture affect not only what we do but how we think. Consumeristic cultural values can easily affect our relationships in a negative way. For example, a culture of greed leads one to think more about themselves and what they want, and less about the other person in the relationship and what they need. This kind of thinking weakens what is foundational to our lives – our relationships with others and our relationship with God! We all can be agents of God's vision for His kingdom when we reach out, speak to and serve others.

In our second scripture reading today taken from Matthew 6: 25-34 Jesus speaks boldly about worry. Worry is a common personal obstacle keeping us back from fully receiving the Kingdom of God. Jesus' words are recorded in verse 33: ***"But strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."*** This does not mean we will get all our consumer wants when we seek God's Kingdom. Rather, I believe it speaks to the abundant, fuller life one will experience when one's focus is more on God's will of loving one another and advancing peace, and less on the Kingdom of the human world.

Our God is not merely an idea or a concept, but our loving God is a face who came in Jesus Christ. Christ comes to each one. Let us receive him readily in our lives. Shall we pray: Help us Lord to say in each of our hearts, ``let my Kingdom go Lord, and your Kingdom come``! Let us seek your kingdom and not seek our own. Come with your Kingdom into our homes and marriages; come into our relationships; enter our culture, our cities and countries in politics and economic life. Speak a message of peace that we can repeat again and again as individuals, as your church, as the people of your kingdom. Encourage us through your Holy Spirit to reach a hand out to others so your kingdom will come more quickly. Amen.