

The Lord's Prayer: "Desiring the Kingdom"
Matthew 6:10
July 26, 2020

Introduction

[Recite the Lord's Prayer]

By the time I was a junior on the varsity baseball team in high school, I already had a clear calling to full-time, vocational ministry. And you know, like any good sports team in the Bible Belt, no pre-game warm up was complete without huddling up, taking a knee, removing your hat, and saying the Lord's Prayer. As the church kid who was going into ministry, I was the obvious choice to lead us in that. And I loved leading it. For two years, I led our team in that prayer before most games. It was just what you did. But did we mean it? I'm betting that many of us have similar experiences and can say the Lord's Prayer on autopilot. That's exactly why we should study it and remind ourselves what we're actually saying when we pray like Jesus taught us.

Last week Jacob looked at verse 9, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." We saw the intimacy of God in that we call him Father. We saw the transcendence of God because he is in heaven. We saw the glory of God because his name is hallowed, or praised, or made holy. Today, we'll study the next phrase of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:10: "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The God we call Father is also a King who has the power to meet our requests.

Before we get into this verse, let me remind you that the Lord's Prayer doesn't come to us by itself. It's in the context of a larger section of Jesus's teaching called the Sermon on the Mount. You may be familiar with other verses in this section – like the Beatitudes "blessed are the poor in spirit, meek, peacemakers, etc", or the ones where Jesus says that anger is the root of murder, or lust the root of adultery, or how we should turn the other cheek if someone slaps us. What Jesus is trying to help us see in the Sermon on the Mount is that the heart-level issues really matter. He's inviting his disciples to a heart-deep righteousness rather than skin-deep righteousness. So, it shouldn't be surprising to us that in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus has given us a prayer to shape our desires, our heart-level wants and needs. Jesus has given us a prayer to help us desire the things we should want to desire (but wouldn't naturally choose ourselves).

There's a quote attributed to French author **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**, who is most widely known for his children's novel *The Little Prince* that goes like this: **"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."**

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is revealing the prayer of a heart that's rightly aligned with the Father so that his disciples can align their hearts with God's heart. Let's study this verse line by line, so we can see three ways praying "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" transforms followers of Jesus.

1. Disciples of Jesus desire the Father's kingdom.

The first line of this verse of the Lord's Prayer says "Your kingdom come". It really shouldn't surprise us because the first message we hear from Jesus in the Gospels is "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Naturally, the kingdom of heaven becomes a frequent topic of Jesus' teaching. But here Jesus teaches us to pray "your kingdom come...", it's the logical outflow of "hallowed be your name." If we want his name to be sanctified, then we want the place where his name dwells to be established. With this line, Jesus is teaching us that his disciples desire the Father's kingdom. Simply defined, **the Kingdom is the "King's power over the King's people in the King's place."**

The establishment of God's kingdom was the goal from the very first page of the Bible. In Creation, God acts as the cosmic king. His words have power. He speaks and things happen. He establishes his power, over his people (Adam and Eve) in his place (creation/Garden). Genesis 1:28, God blesses Adam and Eve, encouraging them to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and – amazingly – God shares his power with humans, allowing us to participate with God in his rule over creation.

But, as we know, it only took three chapters for humanity's new power to go to our head. In Genesis 3 – there was a coup, a mutiny, a rebellion in the Garden of Eden where the first humans make themselves kings and exercise their borrowed power in their own way to do what was right in their own eyes.

In some ways, the whole Bible is the story of God's plan to reestablish his Kingship on earth as in heaven. He called the people of Israel to himself as his "treasured possession among all peoples for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." A kingdom of priests with God as their King who both represent God to the world and bring the world into relationship with him. Later in the story God appoints David and Solomon as human kings over Israel to show them tangible pictures of kings who reigns rightly. But, even the people and kings of Israel joined the rebellion by failing to submit to the King's rule.

And, really, all humans have been choosing the same thing ever since. We've all joined the rebellion, trying to set up our own little kingdoms to fulfill our own desires for our own glory. Of course, we're not literally Kings, but we're always trying to establish our own power in our own places – whether that's in our academic prowess, our social media influence, our cushy bank accounts, our property value, sometimes our families, and (even for ministers) our ministry areas can become our own little kingdoms. The point is that we all strive in our own subtle ways to set out own vision of the good life.

So, when Jesus invites us to pray "Thy Kingdom Come", he inviting us to align our hearts, our hopes, our desires, with the Father's heart. He is teaching his disciples that the Father's kingdom – his power over his people in his place – will meet & surpass our deepest desires. Yes, God is the Mighty King over all creation, but he is also our Father. We can trust that his kindly rule will shatter and break the curse of sin's tyranny. [SUM.]

2. Disciples of Jesus submit to the Father's will.

The second line of this verse reads, “your will be done”. This also is a logical outflow of what's been prayed. If the Father's name is hallowed and the place where he reigns is clearly coming, then it follows that his sovereign will should be accomplished in that place. If we're aligning our hearts with his goodness and directing our desire toward his kingdom, then our wills will align with his will. They're connected to and flow from each another.

It's one thing to pray for the Father's kingdom to come, for all the injustice and sin, evil and wrong to be swept away under his kindly rule. It's a broad prayer that feels mostly outside of ourselves. But the phrase “Your will be done” really brings it home. It confronts us as the kings and queens in our little castles presiding over our little kingdoms. If the Father really is good and holy, if his kingdom really is the true kingdom, then his will is the only one worthy to be accomplished.

Thomas Cranmer, a leader in the English Reformation, said something like: **“What the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies.”** You can see how praying like Jesus taught us becomes like a compass for our hearts, helping us point true north so that we choose from a heart that's rightly-calibrated to our Father's glory and goodness. When we pray “your will be done”, we're opening ourselves up to a whole new arena of possibilities for our life – things we would've never guessed or expected.

I don't know if you've listened to the Shades Podcast at all, but I've loved hearing the stories of some of our staff members. There's a pretty common moment in many of those stories of coming to a fork in the road and needing to choose a path. Which way will you go? Jesus is showing us in the Sermon on the Mount that we'll always default to our own selfishness. But if our hearts are calibrated to trust our Father in heaven who sees us and knows what we need before we ask, then we can more easily submit to his will.

I can think of two moments like that for me personally: Baseball and UMIN. I don't use those examples to make myself a hero – I'm not. But they are real experiences, and they were challenging, and I didn't know how those would play out. But I can stand here years later and give a testimony to God's goodness and faithfulness - even when you have to wrestle those desires to the ground.

But you don't have to take my word for it. You can take Jesus' word for it. He's not teaching us anything he himself wouldn't do. In the Garden of Eden our first parents exerted their own wills, but in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus looked arrest, crucifixion, and death in the face and aligned his human will with the Father's praying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as you will.” You can breathe deeply when you pray “thy will be done” because Jesus knows even more fully the difficulty of praying that way. You can take heart because he sent the Spirit into to comfort, encourage, and intercede for us as we pray. Believer, you can anchor your whole life to the fact that Jesus has been tempted in every respect as we are and yet without sin. He knows our weakness and temptation better

than we do [Man walking against wind]. Which leads us into the final line of Matthew 6:10, “on earth as it is in heaven” and final point:

3. Disciples of Jesus live between two worlds.

This last line of verse 10 shows us Jesus is not oblivious to how things really are on this side of heaven. He teaches us to pray that the Father's kingdom and will would be done "on earth as in heaven." As we pray for the King's power, over the King's people in the King's place, we're praying for that reality to be realized "On earth as in heaven".

Jesus knows how crazy that sounds. He knows the Father's name is not hallowed on earth because many are trying to make much of their own names. Jesus knows the Father's kingdom on earth has been plagued with disloyal and unfaithful servants who perpetuate idolatry and injustice. Jesus knows our twisted wills and desires have left us gazing at our belly-buttons, able to focus only on ourselves to the neglect of the Father's will. Jesus knows. He experienced it. He looked at all our sin and took it onto himself. It's the whole reason he came.

You know John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Jesus is the faithful servant-king who not only fulfills Adam's commission to have dominion but takes the curse upon himself. As Jesus wore the crown of thorns, he bore the curse of God. The thorns, which were a sign of the curse and defeat of Adam, are paradoxically transformed into a sign of the kingship and victory of Jesus. As Jesus hung on the cross with the crown of thorns upon his head, he was suspended between heaven and earth, bringing heaven and earth together so that the Father's Kingdom and the Father's Will might be established forever on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus took the crown of thorns so that we might receive the crown of righteousness at the day of his appearing.

On the third day after his death on the cross, Jesus was raised. The chasm between heaven and earth had been repaired. It was the dawning of a new era. But Jesus would not remain on the earth with his disciples – no, he ascended to the right hand of the Father where he sits on the throne reigning over his kingdom and preparing a place for his people. But in the meantime, Jesus has commissioned his church to go into the world as ambassadors of his kingdom. He has told us that all authority in heaven and earth have been given to him, therefore we make disciples of all nations baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded.

Christians may live between two worlds. We may be watching and waiting for the King's return to reign in power over his people in his place. But Christians have also been commissioned to work while we wait. We have been sent in the Holy Spirit's power to God-given spheres of influence where we, like Christ, bring a glimpse of the kingdom on earth as in heaven.

[will insert practical/tangible examples here]

Conclusion

It's tempting to imagine the Kingdom as an escape from the troubles of this life – kind of like Cossette from Broadway's *Les Mis* imagines “her castle on a cloud. She likes to go there in her sleep. There are no floors to sweep, not in her castle on a cloud.” But Jesus's kingdom is not a dreamy castle on a cloud. It is a real kingdom with a real king coming to a real place.

When we pray “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we're not praying for an escape; we're praying for endurance. We're not praying for a departure, but for an arrival. We're not praying for an exit, but an entrance. We're not praying for an out-breaking, but an in-breaking.

When we pray “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we're praying in accord with Revelation 11:15, that “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

We're praying with the Spirit and the Bride in Revelation 22, who say “Come, Jesus!”. We pray with all who hear, “Come!” If the desires of this life have left you wanting, if your little kingdom is in turmoil, if you're ready to quit going through the motions, if you want, by God's grace to make a difference in this life, if you're fed up with the disappointment of doing life your way, it's time to put all our chips on Jesus's plan for making all things new. Let's join him in praying “your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” and, by God's grace, we'll see the kingdom come in Birmingham as in heaven.