

The Lord's Prayer: The Kingdom | Luke 11:1-4
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God invites us to pray continually for that which is of first importance - the coming of God's victorious kingdom over sin, death, and the devil. In praying for God's kingdom, we pray that it will come upon us as well.

We are in week three of this four week series on the Lord's Prayer. I pray that as we have dug a little deeper into the prayer that it helps you to understand a little more about what we are praying and perhaps also to help you pray more to our Heavenly Father who promises to hear our prayers.

So we began two weeks ago with the first word in the Lord's prayer in the version we've been reading from Luke's Gospel: "Father". And we saw there that God our Father is Present. He has done something for us in defeating sin and death through Jesus. And He wants to connect with us. He invites us to hear his word. He invites us to respond to it in prayer. And he invites us to come to his table where we receive the body and blood of Jesus. God wants to connect with us and he's given us the means to do that.

Then last week we looked at that word Holy (or hallowed). There we noticed a tug, a pull between Father who loves unconditionally and a Holy and righteous God who demands perfection. But we saw that In Jesus, both of these things come together. A loving heavenly Father, out of his great mercy and love, *makes us holy* through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That very thing which God demands from us, well *He Himself* makes it a reality in us. We cannot pull off holy and righteous. But God makes it happen by his grace.

So we've talked about the Father and we've talked about his holiness. So in two weeks we've made our way through the first line of the prayer. And now this morning we take on the second line, "Your Kingdom Come".

Kingdom = Reign

In the Gospels, the ones that we call the 'Synoptic Gospels' (synoptic means "seeing together", there is no greater theme in Jesus' preaching and ministry than 'the kingdom of God'. This is Jesus' whole thing. The appointed time has arrived, and so now God's kingdom is breaking into this world.

Now, we want to unpack this concept because it is incredibly rich but often times it's diminished or lessened. You see, much of the time we want to make a simple equation. When we hear "The Kingdom of God" we automatically equate it with what? With heaven. So, when we hear Jesus preach his Good News stump speech we hear him say "The time has come, heaven is getting closer" or something like that. So, when we hear 'Kingdom of God' we understand it as a place, namely the place we go when we die. But this puts the Kingdom of God still off in the future somewhere.

So, this morning I want us to start thinking of the “Kingdom of God” a little differently. The most important part of this word “Kingdom” is not so much the noun, the place that we imagine when we think of a kingdom. Rather, the most important part of the word “Kingdom” (as Jesus is using it) is the verb, the action, that stands behind it. That is to say, the main idea here isn’t the kingdom, or place itself, but it’s the “king-ing” that the king is doing. Now, we don’t use the word king-ing...we use words like ‘rule and reign’.

So, what Jesus is communicating, the Good News he has come to preach is this: “The appointed time is here. God’s rule and reign has come to earth and is now here.” This is a present reality. In Jesus, God’s kingly deeds have begun.

This is Good News for us because in this world we stand daily against the kingdom of the evil one. All around us we see sin and death and evil and we think that it’s winning out. We think that sin just might be over taking the world. And every older generation always thinks it’s the younger generations’ fault. That things were perfect when they were growing up but only now have things started to falter.

In seminary I taught a couple of Bible studies for older adults at a local congregation. Almost without fail our conversations would devolve into this kind of bemoaning about the younger generation. But the truth is the kingdom of the evil one was at work in the 40’s and 50’s just as much as it is today. Nevertheless, although sin and evil are rampant, the Good News Jesus preaches is this: “The appointed time has come, the Kingdom of God has come near.”

And so we can look at the ministry of Jesus to see exactly what this looks like. What do we see? We see Jesus affirm that he is God’s Anointed, the one whom Isaiah prophesied about. We see Jesus demonstrate his healing power, a foretaste of God’s kingdom in its fullness. And of course we see Jesus take up his cross and carry it all the way to Calvary. This kingly deed of our savior to overcome all the sin and death we encounter in this broken and fallen world.

So the reign of God has come in Jesus and is here. Right. Now.

So, with this in mind, what does it mean for us to pray “Your Kingdom Come”? It means that we pray for God’s Kingdom to come to us. For the blessings of this kingdom to be showered upon us. It means that we pray for all the blessings of the Gospel would be given to us each day. And, indeed, God’s kingdom does come to us. It comes to us through the means of Grace which God has given to us for this very purpose. God’s Kingdom comes, God’s kingly deeds are done, as we gather together as a church and hear His word, received his forgiveness, and partake in Christ’s body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith.

So to pray for God’s kingdom to come is to pray that God continues to work in and through the church on earth.

The Now and the Not Yet

But there is also a tremendous sense in which we are still waiting for God's Kingdom to come, don't you think? While it's certainly true that the Kingdom of God has come near to us as we receive it each week, we all know, experientially, that God's Kingdom hasn't arrived in its fullness.

We know this because of things like the shooting down in Gilroy this past week. We see such sin and evil in the world, such tragedy as families mourn the loss of young children, and we have this longing for God's Kingdom to come in its fullness. For we know, just from watching and listening to Jesus, that God's Kingdom is one of peace, of compassion, of healing, of joy, of celebration. Nevertheless, here and now, we experience violence, hatred, hurt, sorrow, mourning. Here and now we find ourselves continually falling into sin, unable, despite our best intentions, to get out...to get up...to turn ourselves around.

This is why we can speak of God's Kingdom being a Now and Not Yet reality. God's kingdom is a *Now* reality, to be sure. Jesus has made it so. In Jesus, God's kingly deeds have been made manifest on earth. In Jesus, God has taken all of our sin upon Himself and defeated death and the grave through his glorious resurrection.

But God's Kingdom is also a "Not Yet" reality. We are still waiting. We are still waiting for that day when the Kingdom comes in its fullness...that day when Christ will return to raise us up along with all the dead. This is the day when the Kingdom of God will be fully inaugurated. And he will bring with this kingdom the redemption and restoration of all creation.

So to pray "Your Kingdom Come" is not only to pray that God's Kingdom will come through his Word here and now, but to pray "Your Kingdom Come" is also to pray "Maranatha" Come quickly, Lord. It's to pray for Christ to come back just as He has promised to bring the salvation of the world to its completion.

To pray "Your Kingdom Come" means that we pray God would fulfill His promise to bring about His New Creation. To restore what has unravelled.

Your Kingdom Come. May your Kingdom come now, in time. And may your kingdom come at the end of all time, as Jesus ushers in the new, resurrected age.

The Bigness of Our Prayers

In the Large Catechism Luther gives a very astute observation when talking about this petition of the Lord's Prayer. He writes,

From this you see that we are not asking here for crumbs or for a temporal, perishable blessing, but for an eternal, priceless treasure and for everything that God himself possess. It would be far too great for any human heart to dare to desire it if God himself had not commanded us to ask for it. But because he is God, he also claims the honor of giving far more abundantly and liberally than anyone can comprehend -

like an eternal, inexhaustible fountain, which, the more it gushes forth and overflows, the more it continues to give.

So even as we dive into what exactly this means for us to pray for the kingdom of God to come, that we are praying for the Now and for the Not Yet, we also learn something about prayer in general from this. That is, what God has called us to pray for us not mere crumbs from His table. He commands us not to pray for mites.

He commands us, He instructs us to pray for the whole thing. For this whole plan of salvation to reach our ears and our hearts and our minds right here and now. And for His plan of salvation to be made complete on that day of our Lord Jesus Christ. See the breadth and depth of Jesus' instructions for our prayers.

And what do we pray for? We pray for measly things, don't we? We pray for small things We pray for things that only our pea brains can handle. I mean, don't get me wrong...God certainly hears our prayers when we pray for the mundane things. We should actually probably pray for those things, too. But here, our Lord teaches us to pray for the whole shoot and match. From soup to nuts. Therefore we needn't come to our Heavenly Father in prayer with just a little bucket to fill up. We come to him with a great big bucket...with our apron open wide, Luther says, expecting great things.

Why can we expect great things? Because the Kingdom comes without our asking. Be sure about that. But we pray that God's kingdom...the fulness of God's grace and mercy and compassion and peace...all of this comes to us today, tomorrow, now and forever. Amen.