

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Program of Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 6:10

Code: 2236

As we've been learning in these Lord's Day mornings recently, one very important way in which we serve the Lord is in our prayer life, and Jesus is helping us to see how we should pray. Turn again with me this morning to the 6th chapter of Matthew, if you will. If you didn't bring along a Bible, there's one in the pew near you, and I'd like you to follow along as we look from place to place in God's Word this morning.

We serve the Lord in our prayers, but only if our prayers are in accord with His design for prayer, and our dear Lord in this particular passage gives us instruction as to how to pray. That's the intent of this, The Disciple's Prayer, or as it's commonly known, The Lord's Prayer; it is an instruction for us to know how to pray. Prayer is vital; it's to the Christian what breathing is to the human being. It is the drawing in of the presence of God that gives us life and sustenance, and yet we must know how to pray as we ought to pray. And we have problems with that; according to Romans 8, Paul says, "We do not know how to pray as we ought." And our Lord here is helping to make it right so we will understand. And we've been seeing that this particular prayer that the Lord gives is not a prayer to be recited only – although that would certainly be all right. It's not a prayer to be a part of a ritual, or a routine, or a liturgy, but it is a skeleton for which all prayers are to find their form. In other words, these are simply brief, concise statements that open up to us incredible unlimited horizons and vistas of comprehension and content in our prayers. We've been learning that as we've been taking them one phrase at a time.

This morning we come to the third phrase in verse 10. It's the first three words, "Thy kingdom come" – "Thy kingdom come." Let's read the whole prayer, and see it again in its context. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." "Thy kingdom come" – an incredible statement – three simple words in English, three simple words in Greek, and yet they open up to us something so vastly beyond us that we could never conceive all that's contained in that simple statement. As I even approach this text, I feel like a little boy with a pail at the beach standing before the uncharted seas. There's no way I can contain it in my bucket, there's no way I can articulate all that's here, but if I can just begin to whet your appetite, you could spend the rest of your life examining all that is beyond this, and someday in eternity understand the measure of what is meant. "Thy kingdom come." Frances Havergal has beautifully written the following verse to Jesus Christ, and I think in that verse expresses something of

the meaning of that phrase: “Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning, Thee my own beloved Lord. Every tongue Thy name confessing, worship, honor, glory, blessing brought to thee with one accord. Thee my Master and my friend, vindicated and enthroned, unto earth’s remotest end glorified, adored and owned.”

The exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ is what that prayer is about. “Thy kingdom come,” is expressed to the one who has a right to rule and a right to reign, who is none other than the King Himself, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ. God the Father seeks this, so when you pray this you are praying it in accord with God’s will, for in Psalm 2, we read, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” In other words, God says He is exalting His Son, the King. “The LORD hath said unto the Son, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession.” You see, God wants to give the kingdoms of the world to the Son. God desires to set His Son, His King, on the holy hill of Zion to reign on the throne of David. When David wanted to build a temple for the Lord, God said to him through the prophet Nathan, “You can’t do that because you’re a man of blood, I’ll not let you do that,” and God removed from him one great joy, and in return God gave to him one great promise, and said in 2 Samuel 7, “Though you will not build My house, through your loins will come a child, and of that child shall be built a kingdom which shall never end.” And so the promise of the Kingdom to the King, the Son, the eternal Son, is given in the Old Testament, not just there, but many times. In fact, throughout the Old Testament there is a promise of a coming King, one who would be born, “upon whose shoulders would be the government,” says Isaiah. One who would reign, and rule, and have sway in the earth, a Savior, a Monarch, a King, a Messiah.

The very word Messiah means “anointed one,” one with a right to rule and reign. You see, and this is so important for you to understand, God’s program centers on a person. It is not a plan without a person, it is not a program without a person; history focuses on a person – one who will come again to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Such was the hope of Israel, such is the hope of the church – such is the hope of the world. Jesus Christ the King will consummate history. Someone has well said, “History is His story.” History is the redemptive unfolding of God’s plan in the person of Jesus Christ. We are moving to the place where Christ dominates. In Daniel, as we shall see tonight – and I can’t help but mingle the two sermons – in Daniel, as we see the image smashed by a flying stone coming through the air, that stone is representative of Christ, and then the stone fills the whole earth. You see, Christ is inseparable from His Kingdom. There is no plan apart from the person; the person is the plan. And to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” is nothing more or less, nor could it be more or less, than “Christ reign, here and now.” That is what that is saying, and we’ll see it as we move through it this morning.

A true child of God then concerns himself not so much with his own plans, and his own desires, as he does with the determinate program and plan of God, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Praying right is not letting God in on your plans; it is calling for God to fulfill His own. “Thy kingdom come.” It

takes quite a transformation in the life of a believer to come to the place where instead of saying, “My kingdom come,” he says, “Thy kingdom come.” Oh, we may say, “Thy kingdom come,” in words, but I wonder sometimes if our prayers aren’t literally filled with our own kingdom, our own plan, our own rule, our own reign, our own causes. And yet all of history, all of redemptive history – from the fall in Genesis, where we heard of the seed of the woman to be born to bruise the serpent’s head, all of history is moving to the glorification of the Son of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All of redemptive history – and all history is redemptive history in that sense – is moving to the consummation, the return of Christ. His cause, and His program, and His plan is our preoccupation. But have you noticed how that goes against your human nature; have you noticed that? Have you noticed how much your prayers are filled with yourself? Have you noticed how you rush into God’s presence to unload on Him your needs, your causes, your concerns? I guess it’s always that way with human nature, because we have a bent towards self.

I don’t think it’s better illustrated anyplace than it’s illustrated in the life of a baby. A newborn baby knows nothing of the community spirit. A baby knows nothing about letting someone else have their choice. A baby screams, and is unable to deal with something like a mother coming in and saying, “You know, I’m really going to get to that, I think by about 9:15. But in the meantime, I’ve got a few things to do.” No. A baby understands one thing, and that’s me, me, me, I want, I want, and when they get a little after the stage of even being in the crib, it’s “that’s mine, you can’t have it.” And that’s the bent, and as they grow up, we continue the same kind of thing. We generate subcultures. We appeal to those subcultures through advertising, and through the various things in our society, and when they grow up, even through the Junior High and the High School age we tell them that they are the king of their own castle, that they are to determine their own destiny. They are the master of their own fate. They will arrange their own affairs. They are charting their own course. They are to govern their own lives. And so the whole of human society is a selfish, self-centered orientation that knows very little about any other pronouns than me, mine and I. And so when God invades a life, and all of a sudden the command of the Word of God is that when you pray it isn’t me, mine and I, it’s Thy name be hallowed, and Thy will be done, and Thy kingdom come, that goes against the grain. And then when you have people coming along telling us that we are to tell God that, I hear these preachers saying that we’re to go to God and demand certain things, and we’re to claim certain things, and affirm certain things, and force God to do certain things. That’s a total miscomprehension of all that God has ever designed to do in human history, and that is to glorify His own name, His own cause, and His own will, and His own Son, Jesus Christ.

Now, when I sincerely believe, and I genuinely confess Christ as Lord and King in my life – and beloved, that’s what salvation does; salvation isn’t anything less than that. It isn’t just taking Him as Savior, and not as Lord. Salvation is to confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, Romans 10. And when you have done that, you are brought then into an affirmation that the direction of your life is toward the exaltation of the Lord of your life, who is Jesus Christ, and your own causes are only valid insofar as they agree with and are in accord and harmony with the eternal causes of God to be

revealed in Christ. When I pray, “Thy kingdom come,” I am really in an affirmation of my own will relinquishing the rule of my own life, and I am saying to God’s Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ within me, “You take control, and You do what You will for Your glory.” Now, when you do that, you bring yourself into an immediate confrontation with your own human nature, because your human nature screams for its own will, and its own way, and its own causes. Oh, beloved, that we could be preoccupied with the things of God, that we could be lost in His Kingdom, because if that were true, then we would begin to value things that should be valued, and no man could ever take anything away from us.

People say to me all the time, “What’s going to happen to America? Oh, we’ve got this problem over in Iran, we’ve got the international blackmail, we’ve got all the intrigues in our own country, economically, and politically, and in education, and in encroaching humanism, and morality, and all of these things, homosexuality. What’s going to happen to our own country? Is it going to get worse, are we going to get persecuted?” Well, there are already I think five pastors in America on trial now who could go to jail for things they believe, and maybe it’s coming. Maybe the time is coming when we’re not going to be able to say certain things, and they’re going to put us in jail. But if our causes – mark it – are God’s causes, then we lose nothing; if the investment of our lives are in His Kingdom, that cannot be touched.

People say, “Aren’t you concerned about America, aren’t you concerned about where America’s going?” Well, I am in a sense, because this is my homeland, and I’m grateful to God for putting me here, and the freedoms that are here I’m thankful for. But frankly, folks, my concern is God’s Kingdom, not a passing nation in the history of the world. America will go the way of all the rest of the nations; inexorably built into America is the inevitable hour indicated by God’s Word, “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” America will not last, because no nation ever lasts, because built into it are the seeds of its own damnation because of sin. And we can see rapidly that we have abandoned already our causes for God, we have already abandoned our biblical standards and morality, and we are on the backside on the way down, we know that. But America is not the issue; the issue is the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Christ, and His causes, and if that’s our concern, then whatever they take, they’ll never touch the things that really matter.

I said to one of the young people at a college Bible study Friday night, somebody said to me, “What would happen if you got persecuted for preaching, or if these things happen?” And by the way, in many generations, and many times even in our own day in other countries, that’s what’s happened. And I simply said this: “Well, you know, if they come after me, and they take everything I have, and put me in jail they can never touch anything that’s valuable to me,” right? They can take my car, and they can take my house, they can take my clothes, they can take a few trinkets we got lying around, they can take all that stuff. They can’t take the love I have for my wife, and her love for me. They can’t take the love I have for my children, and their love for me. They can’t take the love I have for God’s people, and the people’s love for me. They can never touch my friendships. They can never touch

Christ in my life. They can never touch anything in the Kingdom. And so I invest my life there, and so my causes become God's causes, and the only issues that the believer should be concerned about are those issues that build His Kingdom. That's why we don't want to get sidetracked into the things of our day, and the things of our world. We are in the business of being committed to the Kingdom, and the Kingdom will go on, and the gates of hell will never prevail against it. Nations will come and go – our own should Jesus tarry – but that is never the issue with us. The issue with us is the Kingdom – the Kingdom. It doesn't mean we aren't to pray for our leaders; we are, the Bible tells us that. But we're to pray that our leaders would act, and speak, and think in accord with God's principles. We are Kingdom people, and so for us to pray "Thy kingdom come," is the most basic part of our lives. We are to pray for God's causes. How can we call ourselves Christians, how can we say we have affirmed the Lordship of Christ, how can we say we have crowned Him King of our lives, when we are not preoccupied with His causes, but with our own?

Now remember, the Lord is presenting here the pattern for praying. He is showing us that the standard of religion in His own day among the Jews was inadequate. Their fasting was not the kind that they should have done, their giving was not right, their theology was not right – He said that in chapter 5. Their relation to material things was not right – He'll say that in the rest of chapter 6 – and for here, He says, "Your praying isn't right." Why? You pray for your own glory. Look back in verse 5: "You do not pray like the hypocrites," He said, "who love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men." Don't pray that way seeing your own gain, your own ends, your own selfish pride. "Thy kingdom come." It's His causes that should be in your heart. And so we have a model prayer.

Now remember this, every part of this prayer speaks of God. "Our Father, who art in heaven," that's God's paternity, as our Father. "Hallowed be thy name," that's God priority. "Thy kingdom come," that's God's program. "Thy will be done," that's God's plan. "Give us this day our daily bread," that's God's provision. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," that's God's pardon. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," that's God's protection. "For thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever," that's God's pre-eminence. The whole of prayer focuses on Him, and thus we've used the verse again and again, and where Jesus said in John 14:13, "Whatever you ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." It's the glory of God that is the measure of prayer. The paternity of God, we already studied that, didn't we? It's God who is our loving Father, and we go to Him with no fear, no anxiety, but with an eager boldness because we know He loves us. And then we discussed the priority of God, "Hallowed be thy name," and we said that that means that God's name is all that He is. And to hallow His name means to set it apart, to exalt it, to glorify it, to honor it, and we gave you four ways that we do that. We hallow His name when we believe that He is, when we believe that He is who He is, when we completely are committed to His presence, and when we obey His Word. And He is to be hallowed, not in general in the universe, but in general in the universe, and most importantly, through us.

Now we come to the third one: God's paternity, God's priority, and God's program. What is His program? "Thy kingdom come." His program is to exalt Christ; His program is that the consummation of history would be in the reign and the rule of Jesus Christ. The Talmud, which is the Jewish commentary on God, and God's Word, and God's law, said this, "That prayer in which there is no mention of the Kingdom of God is no prayer at all." "That prayer in which there is no mention of the Kingdom of God is no prayer at all." The Kingdom is the heart of the matter. The Kingdom is that for which God has planned history, that He may rule, and that He may reign, and that He may be supreme. He comes first in our prayers; before you go blurting into His presence with all your petitions stop long enough to consider His causes, His Kingdom, and affirm your yearning that He be glorified in His purposes, and reiterate that your requests are only requests insofar as they're in accord with His purpose.

Now, why is it so hard to do this? Let me show you. Back in verse 9, it says, "Hallowed be thy name," and we talked about that in great detail. There's a logical order in these petitions that really help us to understand. "Hallowed be thy name." We say, "Oh, Lord, I want Your name to be holy. I want Your name to be made holy in my life. I want to 'adorn the doctrine of God,' as Paul told Titus. I want to live out the holiness that manifests You to the world. Be hallowed in me – let Your name be made hallowed in me." And we say that, and yet there's this problem in that. What is the problem? That as soon as we desire to live a holy life, as soon as we desire to live for Him, we face the fact that we run right into a kingdom that exists in this world, that the Bible says is the kingdom of darkness, right? And it is the kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of Satan, that withstands the effort of a believer to live a hallowed life. Therefore, subsequent to saying, "Hallowed be thy name," we must say, "Thy kingdom come." Because if Satan's kingdom is not withstood, there will be no hallowing of His name, unless, as Paul says, "we are transformed from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son," we cannot hallow His name. So that "Thy kingdom come," is the only way that His name will ever be hallowed. Until His reign is established, until His rule is affirmed, we have no capacity to hallow His name. And you will notice, too, that the next petition is "Thy will be done." His Kingdom cannot ever come until His will is done, because His Kingdom and His will is one and the same. And so there's a beautiful progression. His will cannot be done until He is acknowledged as King, no one will submit to His will until they submit to His Lordship, and until they submit to His will, He can't be Lord, and until He is Lord, you have no capacity to hallow His name, because He must energize that. And so it wouldn't be enough to say, "Hallowed be thy name," unless we said, "Thy kingdom come," and we can't say, "Thy kingdom come," apart from saying, "Thy will be done," because His Kingdom is the right to rule, which gives Him the privilege of expressing His will to which we submit. And so it all flows together.

Now, let's look at the phrase, "Thy kingdom come." It's so exciting to me – I just hope you're as excited about this when I'm done as I am. I just feel thrilled at what the Lord is beginning to open up in my own heart on this. Three words, "Thy kingdom come." The word thy, a simple pronoun, *sou*. The word

kingdom, *basileia* – I want to talk about it a minute, *basileia*. The word is translated “kingdom,” but it means rule or reign. I just wish, I guess, personally, that everywhere that word appears they had translated it reign, R-E-I-G-N, reign, because I think that says something to us that kingdom doesn’t. We think of kingdom, and immediately what do you think of? Henry the Eighth, castles, forts, knights. Or maybe you think of the magic kingdom, Disneyland. I don’t know what you think of – castles there, too, Sleeping Beauty, who knows? Kingdom – and we think of when we think of a kingdom we think of all the ramifications of that. We think of land, and we think of people riding horses, and pomp, and ceremony, and maidens, and knights, and castles, and moats, and walls, and laws, and all that stuff. And we can’t think of kingdom in any other terms, because that’s the world’s perspective. That’s why Pilate said to Jesus, “Are You a king?” And the implication was “what kind of a king are You? I mean whoever saw such a king as You? What kind of a king are You?” And to which Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this” – what – “world.”

I wish they’d taken the word *basileia* and translated it “reign,” “Thy reign come,” because we would understand that. That means Christ rules. He doesn’t have to have walls, and castles, and moats, and knights, and fair maidens, and crowns, and all of that. It’s the rule of Christ, it is the reign of Christ, it is the sovereignty of Christ for which we are to pray. And then the verb *elthet*, which is an aorist active imperative form of *erchomai*, which means “to come” – it means let it immediately and suddenly come. Let it come and let it come now, and let it come suddenly. Let it come actually, and let it come completely.

Now then, these three words introduce to us three questions that I’d like to try to answer, and I say try because I can’t do it in its fullness, but I’m going to try to give you something to think about, and I think it’s exciting. Three questions, question number one: whose is the kingdom? That’s the word, Thy. We’ll take each word and make a question. Whose is the kingdom? It’s Thy kingdom. Who is Thy? Go back to the antecedent in verse 9: “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.” Whose kingdom is this? It’s God’s kingdom; it’s not a human kingdom, it’s God’s kingdom. We’re not involved in a human kingdom; that’s not our priority. We are not of this world. We have been translated out of this world. Our citizenship is not here. We are sojourners and pilgrims. Our citizenship is there. We look for a city whose builder and maker is God.

I’m amazed how people want to worry about how they can preserve the church through the political entities in society. It can’t be done; you can’t do it. There is no human institution made that can dovetail with the kingdom, none; and that’s why when Christians get political they find themselves with all kinds of strange bedfellows, because you can’t advance the kingdom through the politics of any society. One of the tragedies in America is in the early years of America, when America was Christian in a greater sense than it is today by far, and the leaders of the country were Christians, the church relinquished to the government certain rights. They let the government take over taking care of the widows, and taking care of the orphans, and a welfare system, and they let it go to the government because they were all Christians. Now we wake up and find out later that the government

has taken over all those social responsibilities that belong to the church, and we don't know how to get them back again, and we don't like what the government's doing with them. And if somebody had of thought long ago that you can't run the kingdom through the government, maybe we wouldn't have gotten into this. This is unique. We're not talking about a man-made kingdom, they come and go. Egypt came and went, Syria came and went, Assyria came and went, Babylon came and went, Medo-Persia came and went, Rome came and went, and will come again. Greece: Alexander the Great conquered everything from Europe clear to India, and the northern of Europe into Egypt, and it's gone, and nothing is left of that great empire. Historians tell us there have been at least 21 great civilizations, all of which are now extinct.

Daniel said it – he said it in reference to Babylon, but it could be said in reference to all nations of the world – “God has numbered the kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided.” And that night the Medes and the Persians came through the gates, and wiped out the Babylonian Empire. All kingdoms go the way of all flesh; the descending power of sin is that decay, and distress, and destruction are inevitable. And it'll happen in America – it is inevitable, it is the inexorable law of God. But we're not talking about that. We never equate the church with America; we ever equate the kingdom of God with America. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of God, and it is bigger than a nation, it is different than a nation, and so our cause is God's cause. I love this country because it's my own home, and because God's given us great freedoms here, and I'm grateful to Him for that, and because there are people here I love, and people I long for that they should know Christ. But His kingdom is my cause, and this country will only exist, and will only be tolerated in His heart and my heart, as long as it is in accord with the cause of His kingdom, and when it ceases to do that, it has no right to be perpetuated. His kingdom is the issue, not my kingdom, but His. And I can stress that, as I said earlier, you've got to learn somewhere in your prayer life, and somewhere in your commitment to God, that it isn't your cause that matters. You see, that's what our Lord meant when He said, “You seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and He will take care of adding all those other things that involve you.” Your clothing, and your housing, and your food, all those things, He'll take care of if you seek His kingdom. And so what are our prayers then? Lord, I pray that You will do whatever advances Your kingdom, whatever brings Your rule and Your reign. Whose is the kingdom? His.

Second question, what is the kingdom? And that's an important question; what is it? What are we talking about when we're talking about the rule of Christ, the reign of Christ? Well, we can't cover everything. I would suggest if you want a good book on it get Alva McClain's book on *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, comprehensive, wonderful book on that subject. But let me just touch on it, all right? And ah, this is exciting. What is the kingdom? When we say, “Thy kingdom come,” what are we saying? Well, first of all, the kingdom is a phrase, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, is a phrase used more than any other by Jesus. Very common phrase; in fact, He talks about preaching the Good News of the kingdom. In fact, when He came it says that He said, “Repent, for the kingdom is at hand.” Jesus said – and I think this is very important – He said this in Luke 4:43: “I must preach

the kingdom of God; for therefore am I sent.” In other words, whatever this kingdom is, it’s the heart of His message; why? Because it’s the heart of the plan, it’s the heart of history, it’s the heart of everything – the reign and the rule of Christ is the apex of human history. Nothing else matters except for this; and those things which do matter, matter because they come into accord with this. Jesus spent all of His years with His disciples, brief as they were, teaching them the kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom, and then when He died and rose again, He had forty more days, and in Acts chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, it says, “He appeared to His disciples and He gave them commandments pertaining to the kingdom of God.” He had only forty days left, but it was kingdom message again, and He just kept talking about the kingdom, about His rule and His reign.

Now, Jesus spoke of the kingdom in three ways, past, present, and future. He spoke of the kingdom as past, for it embodied Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Matthew 8:11. It was already around. He spoke of the kingdom present, because in Luke 17:21, He said, “The kingdom of God is in your midst. It’s right here,” He said. And He spoke of the future, because here He says, “Pray Thy kingdom come.” Now, how can the kingdom be already there in the past, here in the present, and yet need to come in the future? What is this kingdom, this kingdom that’s in every tense; this kingdom that is past, present, and future, all at the same time; this kingdom that already was, already is, and needs to be? Well, the Jews had an idea; they thought the kingdom was political. They thought the kingdom was going to be Jesus coming in and knocking off the Romans, but it wasn’t. What is this kingdom? Well, keep in mind this for the first thing: John 18:36, Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world;” keep that in mind, so whatever it is it won’t be like you’re used to. So when Pilate said, “Are You a king?” what Pilate was saying was there’s a whole lot of confusion. “How can You claim to be a King?” And they nailed it up on His cross: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” cynically, mockingly, what kind of a king is this? This is a king? And Jesus said, “You see and you don’t understand, because my kingdom is not of this world.” So if you’re looking for the kind of kingdom you see around you, you’re not going to see it in Jesus Christ; it isn’t that kind. Well, what kind of kingdom is it?

Let me make a distinction for you that’ll help you to understand that. First of all, there are two elements to the kingdom: there is the universal and the earthly. One covers the whole universe, and one is related to the earth. Now, let me just talk about the universal kingdom. In a sense, God is the King of the whole universe, right? No question about that. I mean He made it, He runs it, He’ll bring it to its consummation; He is the universal King. James Orr says, “There is, therefore, recognized in Scripture a natural and universal kingdom or dominion of God, embracing all objects, persons, and events, all doings of individuals and nations, all operations and changes of nature and history, absolutely without exception,” end quote. In other words, God dominates, and the Bible talks about this. Psalm 145:13 says, Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.” Psalm 103:19: “The Lord ruleth over all.” First Chronicles 29: “Thou reignest over all.” Jeremiah 10: “Thou art an everlasting king.” Psalm 29:10: “The Lord sitteth king forever.” First Chronicles 29:11 and 12 sums up God’s universal kingdom in absolutely breathtaking words: “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven or in the earth is thine. Thine is the

kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. And thou reignest over all." What great words. He is the universal king, and He mediates that rulership through His Son, by Whom He made the worlds, and of whom is said in Colossians 1, "He is before all things, and by him all things consist." And of whom says Paul to Timothy, "He is called the king eternal, only wise." God is the universal king, and He mediates it through His Son, who rules, and is given the right to judge and reign.

Now listen, that's the universal kingdom. Look at verse 10 for a minute; you see what it says? "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That's a Hebrew parallelism, and I think we could take the second part and add it to the first part and get the sense of it. Thy kingdom come in earth, as it is in heaven. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. We could even say, "Hallowed be thy name in earth, as it is in heaven," right? Is God's name hallowed in heaven? Yes. Is God's will done in heaven? Yes. Is His reign and rule established in heaven? Yes. Then what is it asking here? That it be established where? On the earth; that's the essence. The point is this, beloved: the universal kingdom in heaven is established; the prayer is let it come to this earth. This one little infinitesimal speck of sand in an infinite universe, that rebels against holy God, let it be brought into harmony, see, with the rest. The universal kingdom is total, and uninterrupted, and eternal, and we are simply able to acknowledge that. But what we're praying here is, "Oh, God, stop the rebellion. Turn it around, and may You be reigning here as You're reigning there." It's a great concept. Although His name is hallowed in heaven, it isn't always hallowed on earth; although His will is done in heaven, it isn't always done on earth; and although His kingdom is come in heaven, it isn't come in all cases on earth, because there's rebellion. The purpose, then, of the prayer is to bring His kingdom to earth, that He might put down sin, that He might put down rebellion, that He might put down evil, that He might bring in God's hallowed name, God's kingdom, God's will. And you know, it's wonderful to think about. That's going to happen, by the way, and when it does happen there won't be any more distinguishing between His universal and His earthly kingdom; they'll blend into His eternal reign. They'll blend into His eternal reign.

So the kingdom is Christ's rule on earth, that's what we're praying for. We're not praying "Thy kingdom come," universally. He reigns forever there. We're praying "on earth as it is in heaven," that's what we're praying. Oh Lord, the earth is our preoccupation; bring the fullness of Your rule here. Let me ask you a question: does this world need the rule of Jesus Christ? Amen. Let me ask you another one: is there coming a day when He's going to rule this world? There is, and He'll rule it with rod of iron. There is coming a day in the future when He will rule, and when He will reign, and when our prayers will ultimately, and finally, and fully be answered. I believe in that thousand-year millennial kingdom the Revelation talks about, and I believe that then we'll move right into the eternal state, where the earthly kingdom and eternal universal kingdom are blended into one forever, one which we will occupy with His own blessed presence. Whose kingdom? His. What is the kingdom? The kingdom in mind here is His rule on earth.

Third question: and here's the heart of the matter – how does it come? It says in this verse, "Thy kingdom," the Greek says, "let it come, and let it come now." That would be the way to translate it. How do we let it come? How do we do it? How do we bring the kingdom? How do we get after this? How is this prayer to be answered? We've already hinted at it, but let me give you three ways. I think this sums it up, three ways.

Number one: conversion. How can you bring the reign of Christ to this earth? First of all by conversion. I think this is a missionary prayer, I think this is an evangelism prayer. I'll tell you one thing: Christ reigns in my life, does He reign in your life? In that sense, He's brought His rule to this earth, is that right? You see in Luke 17, He said, "Don't look for the kingdom here and there." People say, "Where's the kingdom, where's the kingdom, where's the kingdom, where are the politics of the kingdom?" He says, "Don't look here and there. The kingdom of God is in your midst." Where? Here He was, standing there, and they didn't even recognize Him. He is His kingdom; you will never separate Him from His kingdom. That's why the stone that smites the image becomes the kingdom that fills the earth. Christ in my life, ruling and reigning in my life, brings His reign to this earth, and He mediates His kingdom through the believer. It's a great concept. That's why the Bible says we are kings and priests. God literally mediates His kingdom through the believer; He reigns in my life and yours. And so to say, "Thy kingdom come," is to pray that He may take up His reigning residence in the hearts and lives of those who yet are in rebellion. It's a prayer for salvation. When you receive Jesus Christ, you did essentially what the hymn writer said, "King of my life, I crown Thee now, Thine shall the glory be." That's what you said. I believe the Christmas carol had it right, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come." We think of Bethlehem, don't we? That isn't what the hymn writer had in mind. "Let earth receive her King." How? "Let every heart," do what? "Prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing." He is king in a heart, that's His kingdom, that's His reign, that's His place of rule, He takes up residence. You are the only castle this king ever has; you are His only palace. And so it's a petition for conversion, that He might reign in the hearts of men.

Listen, beloved, the reason we evangelize, the reason we talk to people about Christ, is not so much for their sake, but for His, because it is wrong that someone should not allow Him to reign, 'cause He's worthy. And thus did Paul say in Romans 1 that we go out and we preach, "obedience to the faith among the nations" – why – "for the sake of His name." Third John 7, "We went out preaching for the sake of His name," it says. The reason to become a Christian is in order to glorify and exalt His name, and His kingdom. So the kingdom of God then begins with an invitation. If Christ is going to reign in the earth, it begins with an invitation. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like this," in Matthew 22. "It's like a man having a big feast, it's like a man having a big banquet, and he sends out invitations to the guests to come, and they can either take the invitation and come, or refuse it." Jesus said, "Go into the highways and byways, and finally compel them to come in," He said. In other words, "There's an invitation here, My kingdom is here, and I want you to come." And so to pray, "Thy kingdom come," is to pray an evangelistic prayer, a missionary prayer, inviting people to the Gospel

of the kingdom.

Secondly, in the conversion aspect, the kingdom of God begins with an invitation, and it includes repentance. Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand." "Repent." In Mark 1:14 and 15 it says, and I think it sums it up so well, that "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom," and what was it? "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the good news." The kingdom comes when you repent; the kingdom comes when you believe. So it's an invitation that demands repentance.

Thirdly, it demands an act of the will. It demands an act of the will. Jesus told a scribe one time, "You're not far from the kingdom." What did He mean? He meant you've got the head knowledge, you just haven't made the choice yet. If you want to enter the kingdom, you not only have to have the head knowledge, you have to make the choice. "No one," Jesus said, "who puts his hand to the plow" = is a would-be follower, who begins to follow and then looks back – "is fit for My kingdom." In other words, you can know about it, and you can make some effort toward it, but until you make that final complete commitment to a decision, you don't enter the kingdom; the rule of Christ is not established in your heart. So remember this: the kingdom is extended as an invitation. It is an invitation that demands repentance from sin. It demands an acceptance by an act of the will of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

And may I say lastly in this little thought that the kingdom is internal. "My kingdom is not of this world." It is an internal one; it is in the heart and the life. Such a kingdom, such an internal kingdom, offered by an invitation that demands repentance and a choice, turning away from sin, turning toward God, is offered to every man. How should we respond; how should you respond? Well, Jesus said this, number one: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." You should be seeking it, shouldn't you? If there is a kingdom, you ought to seek it, if there is a reign and a rule of Christ, you ought to run for it, you ought to seek it with all your heart. You know, in Luke 16:16 it says, and this is a remarkable verse, "The law and the prophets were proclaimed until John" – John the Baptist. "Since then," listen to this, "the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." There's a lot of ways to interpret that, but I like the one that takes that verb *biazetai*, which really means to enter violently. When people whose hearts are right see the kingdom, they are in a hurry to rush into it. They literally seize it, like violent things. When they see the value of God's kingdom, they are rushing to grasp it. Is that your attitude? We ought to pray "Thy kingdom come," in the sense that men be converted, that they be rushing to grasp the reign of Christ in their life.

Secondly, we ought to value it. You know, in Matthew 13 Jesus says, "the kingdom is like a treasure," in verse 44, then in verse 45 He says, "It's like a pearl of great price." It is priceless, it is inestimable in its value, and we, because it is worth so much, should run to grasp it. We are to receive the kingdom. By faith we take hold of it; lip service won't do it. Many will say, "Lord, Lord," and not enter the kingdom. Money won't do it. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a man to

buy his way into the kingdom. Self-righteousness won't do it, because "Unless your righteousness exceeds the scribes and Pharisees, you'll never enter the kingdom." What does it? Faith – receiving the invitation, repenting of your sin by an act of the will, affirming the Lordship of Christ; seeing that internal miracle take place. And you have to seek it with all your heart because you value it. So the kingdom comes by conversion.

Secondly, I believe the kingdom comes by commitment. You say, "I'm already a Christian, John." When I pray, "Oh, Lord, may Your program, and Your reign, and Your rule be in sway in the world," I'm praying that people's hearts will be opened to Your reign, and opened to Your rule. We ought to say, "Oh, "Your kingdom come to the hearts of rebel men who are not glorifying You." But what if we're already Christians, how does it apply to us? What can I say to the Lord? Lord, Your rule come in my life, if it's already there? Just this, folks: He is Lord, and He is ruling, but I think there in the Christian life is a time daily for us to affirm that we bow the knee to that rule, right? That's commitment, where I say every day, "You are the Lord." And I come to those perennial crossroads in my life where I choose my will or His will, my way or His way, and I inevitably pulled both ways. And when I affirm, "I commit myself to Your causes and Your kingdom," I'll go His way. In the heart of the believer, we are to submit and commit ourselves constantly to the submission to His Lordship. I call it responding to the royalty residing in us. I think this is what Paul meant. In Romans 14:17, he's writing to Christians; you know what he said? He said, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," the kingdom of God is not on the outside, the kingdom of God is not external, listen to this. He said, "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." And so if the kingdom is to come to my life, I can pray as a Christian, "Oh Lord, make me more righteous, more like Christ; oh, Lord, fill me more with Your blessed peace; oh, Lord, may I know the fullness of the joy of the Holy Spirit." And as I give myself over to the virtues that the Spirit wants to produce in my life, I am asking that the fullness of Christ's reign be made manifest in me.

There's a third way the kingdom comes. And I'm amazed, you know, that some people have taken these first two and said, "That's all there is; that's the end." I can't accept that. There's a third way. The kingdom comes in conversion, commitment, and finally, we'll just call it coming again, or consummation. I believe, people, that one day the heavens will split wide open, and Jesus Christ will descend and plant His feet on the Mount of Olives, and in this world He will establish His kingdom. I believe that Revelation tells us it'll be a thousand-year millennial kingdom, in which He will set things right and rule with a rod of iron, and the world will finally hear the answer to the prayer, "may the universal kingdom become the earthly kingdom." And for a thousand years He will reign with a rod of iron, in righteousness, justice, truth and peace, at the end of which time that kingdom will phase into the universal kingdom, and never again will there be a distinction. But I believe this world will see a real reigning of Jesus Christ here, when the curse is reversed, and it's like God meant it to be before the fall. There is a coming again. One has written, "Thy kingdom come, O God. Thy rule, O Christ, begin. Break with Thine iron rod the tyrannies of sin."

There is coming a day when He will do that. Israel prayed for it, the church prayed for it, the disciples asked, "Is this the time the kingdom will come?" And He said, "It's not yet for you to know the time and the seasons; you just stay busy till it does." I believe Jesus is coming to set up His kingdom. I believe the hymn writer who said, "Jesus shall reign where e'er the sun doth its successive journeys run. His kingdom spread from shore to shore till moon shall wax and wane no more." I believe He'll rule. I believe it's the destiny of this earth that Jesus rule on the earth, in the throne of David, in the city of Jerusalem, from His throne, and set right the curses that have been brought to this earth. And like Peter, I look and hasten the day when He comes. I hear John, do you hear him? Saying again and again, "Jesus is coming," in the Book of Revelation, "Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming." And finally you get to the end, and he says, "Even so" – what – "come, Lord Jesus." That's part of our prayer too, isn't it? We're praying not only that His reign would come in the hearts and lives of people who don't know Him, we're praying that His reign would come in our hearts to the fullness He's worthy of, but we're praying, too, that someday He'd come and break the tyranny of sin, set this evil, ugly, cursed world right. It's got to be that way, because that's what the Bible promises. And I believe that we are praying for an instantaneous miracle of salvation in the hearts of people, "come to their hearts and come now," and I believe we are asking for a momentary immediate commitment, "Lord, You are Lord; may I obey You now? Here and now I affirm it, and Lord, someday when You come to set up Your kingdom, may it be sudden, and immediate, and instantaneous when You take Your throne." That glorious day is coming, beloved, and in the meantime, the kingdom is in your midst, as He reigns and rules in the hearts of His people. Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for giving us the privilege beyond words, beyond our thoughts, of being a part of Your kingdom. Oh, Lord, beyond us to conceive such grace, to make us part of the plan, and then to make us messengers of the King to this weary sin-torn world. Father, we do acknowledge You as king, as manifest in the eternal Son, Jesus Christ; for His glory we live, for His glory we pray. Amen.

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