

# Thy Kingdom Come

## Matthew 6:1-21

### Introduction

My heart has been burdened in recent months with what seems to be an increased focus on things related to the kingdom of this world.

- There are wars and other kinds of unrest in multiple places around our globe.
- We see increased violence on the streets of our own nation's cities, and not just violence instigated by the average citizen.
- The dialogue on social media is no longer dialogue. It's diatribe.
  - As one post I saw lamented recently

“One disagreement outweighs decades of love.”

- It is clear to everyone that we live in a politically divided country.
- Tension is increasing within families.
  - Just this past week a man in Dayton called 911 to report he had just shot his girlfriend. In his words “she got what she deserved.” Unbelievable.
    - She died from her wounds.
- The list goes on.

If this is what life is to be like now, I am depressed.

Fortunately, we Christians know of another option. Our great hope is for a coming kingdom – a kingdom not of this world. A kingdom unlike anything this world has to offer.

- We know that is the Kingdom of Heaven.
- We know only the Kingdom of Heaven can solve the issues we are facing and heal the emotions we are feeling.
- And I, like many, are longing more intently for the arrival of that Kingdom.

When we gather to worship, I generally conclude with the Benediction that begins: “The Lord bless you and keep you.”

- The early Christians ended their services in a different. They said:

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)

- These were brothers and sisters in Christ who knew the reality of persecution. The yearning of their hearts is like the growing yearning in mine: Come quickly. Thy Kingdom Come.

We Lutherans pray for the coming of this kingdom each time we gather for worship. We know it as the second petition of The Lord's Prayer:

Thy kingdom come. (Matthew 6:10)

- In my pre-Lutheran days, we would pray that prayer. I knew it by heart before I ever came to the Lutheran church.
- But I have never prayed it as much as I have since I became a Lutheran.
- In one of my early days as a Lutheran, as I was just learning the ropes, we prayed it three times in one worship service. Three times!

But what does it mean when we pray that petition? For what are we praying?

That petition will be the theme of our Lenten worship this year: “Thy Kingdom Come.”

Our theme is not designed to be political in any way. I hate politics! But it is designed to open our eyes and hearts to what the Scriptures teach us about Kingdom of Heaven. I hope to create in you a longing for God’s kingdom:

- A longing so intense that you strive to live worthy of that kingdom every day
- A longing so real that you find nothing about this world’s agenda to be the least bit satisfying

Matthew’s Gospel will serve as our primary resource, for Matthew closely connects the ministry of Jesus with the Messianic hopes for an eternal kingdom.

- Our Sunday morning messages will be based on Matthew’s Gospel
- Our Thursday evening services will be drawn from the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew – a chapter where he records a number of parables that begin with the words “The Kingdom of Heaven is like ...”

It is important for us to understand that when Jesus taught us to pray “Thy Kingdom Come,” He wanted us to know two things.

1. God isn’t finished working in our world. Even though Jesus came, lived, and died, God’s kingdom has not yet been wholly fulfilled on this earth.
2. God’s work has begun. There are signs all around us that God is at work among us.

So it is a “both/and” prayer. Come and finish the job. But keep doing the job already under way. Without stealing the thunder from all the future sermons in this series, let me give a THREE GOALS about what it means to pray “Thy Kingdom Come.”

## **GOAL #1: PRAY FOR HIS KINGDOM TO BE SEEN IN ME**

Praying, “Thy Kingdom come,” means asking the heavenly Father to help us in our own lives to be faithful, obedient, authentic, and effective Christians.

- If we are not careful, we can easily fall victim to advancing our own agendas as if they were God’s agenda.

This Lent, as we pray that second petition, let us pray that we are pursuing God’s will in our lives and in our world. That might mean letting go of some things we feel strongly

about! That can be hard ... especially if it involves things like another line in the prayer "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive the trespasses of others."

But let us pray that God would show us where we are pursuing our own kingdom, not His.

### **GOAL #2: PRAY FOR THE SALVATION OF THE OTHERS**

We also know from Scripture that God wants all sinners to be saved. Praying, "Thy Kingdom come," is the same as saying, "Dear Lord, please open the hearts of my loved ones, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to receive Your gift of salvation in Jesus Christ."

- God's kingdom will expand as more people turn to Christ for salvation. They enter the kingdom when they come to know the crucified King of that kingdom

We always pray that, don't we? But what if, during this Lenten season, we prayed even more intently for specific people? What if we backed those prayers with fasting or even evangelism? What if we got together with a friend or small group of friends and prayed for the salvation of their specific people too?

### **GOAL #3: PRAY THAT THE WORLD WILL SEE GOD**

Another way we seek the establishment of God's kingdom in the here and now is to pray for aspects of God's nature to be revealed and known in the world.

- We can ask God to show His holiness to us and others so that all might see and understand it and be changed by it.

In Isaiah 6, when the prophet Isaiah captured a glimpse of God's holiness, he was completely undone. So overwhelming was Isaiah's experience, that he saw the glory of God's holiness filling the whole earth:

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory. (Isaiah 6:3).

This Lent, as we pray that second petition, let us pray that God would do something that would capture the attention of the "whole earth." I don't know what that would be, and if I did my vision would be so small compared to what God can do.

### **APPLICATION**

I conclude with this prayer by Albert Benjamin Simpson:

*O Christ my Lord and King,  
This is the prayer I bring;  
This is the song I sing,  
Thy kingdom come.*

*Help me to work and pray,  
Help me to live each day,  
That all I do may say,  
Thy kingdom come.*

Amen