

The Prayer that Changes the World

Matthew 6:9-10

1) Jesus said,

"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. . ." (Matthew 6:9-10)

We can repeat the Lord's Prayer by rote memory without thought, or it can be the true petition of the heart becoming a divine force which unleashes God's glorious blessings. One may pray "Thy kingdom come" without any regard for the intent of Jesus, or one may pray "Thy kingdom come" and the world itself begins to change.

2) How is "Thy kingdom come" a prayer that literally changes the world? We all believe that the Lord wants us to pray this, but what if we really understood what we are praying for? And what would we do if God began to answer our prayer?

3) To pray "Your kingdom come" is to be involved in a gospel conspiracy to take over the world! It is a prayer that changes the make-up of the cosmos, beginning from your very heart and moving out in space and time to everything under creation. Are you really ready for that?

4) Here are eight biblical truths about the kingdom of God as it is revealed in Scripture and eight ways that this prayer changes our world.

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS DIVINE. The word for kingdom simply means "the reign of the king." The kingdom of God is the reign of God. The king is God; His territory includes the whole cosmos. But the question of the ages is this: Is your life part of the territory of the reign of this King?

1) It is important to remember that the kingdom of God did not start with Jesus' appearance; it just made a giant leap forward then. The kingdom of God has always been on the throne. Listen to what the Psalmist said:

"The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19)

Wherever God is, there is His rule and reign. If you will not submit to His rule and reign, the kingdom of God still exists. If you resist the Spirit of God who is moving upon your heart, the kingdom of God will still exist and the intent and purposes of God Almighty will go forward.

2) The person who prays "Your kingdom come" is surrendering his will to the reign of God in his life. This prayer changes the world through a conviction that God must be glorified in your heart and in the hearts of others.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS MESSIANIC. In Jesus, the plan of God is disclosed to us personally. In Jesus, our King has come. He is here. He came healing and teaching. When He cast out demons, He said,

"But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

(Matthew 12:28)

1) Every person healed, every demon cast out, every word spoken to sinners was an advancement of the kingdom of God in the world.

- On the cross, Jesus, the Son of God, shed His blood for His people – all of those who would ever trust in Him – and
- On the morning of the first day of the week, Jesus arose and the King inaugurated a resurrection that would extend to all His people.
- At the ascension, our King ascended, and we are told that He ever lives to intercede for us.

2) In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the witch had cast her evil spell on the inhabitants of Narnia and they were frozen. All over Narnia frozen statues stood as testimonies to the presence of evil. At his resurrection, not only did Aslan breathe upon these poor frozen creatures, but he gave power to Lucy to do the same.

- At Pentecost, the people of God were supernaturally empowered by Jesus to move across the earth and pour out the gospel of Jesus Christ on those frozen in their sins.

3) If you pray "Your kingdom come," you are inviting the King, Jesus Christ, to move into your life and the lives of others and breathe His Holy Spirit into you and them.

- Today, when a Sunday School teacher places her hand on a 6-year-old and speaks of her need for Christ, this prayer is being answered.
- Tonight, when our Director of Youth Ministries speaks the Word of God into the heart of an adolescent, the kingdom of God will come to that young man or woman.

You are praying for new life and eternal life. This is how this prayer is changing the world.

III. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS REVOLUTIONARY. It is no wonder that people are still confused about the kingdom of God today, for so they were when He came.

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

1) Jesus said the "kingdom of God is within you." It is not a physical kingdom first. It is not about land or armies or money or earthly power. In fact, the King of this Kingdom won victory on a cross. Some of the greatest subjects of the Kingdom have been killed for their faith in this King, and today many of them look old and weak and small in the eyes of the world. The Kingdom starts within you and grows out from there.

2) Peggy Noonan wrote a new biography of Pope John Paul II. One of the most interesting things is her assessment of how transforming it was when the newly elected Polish Pope went to Communist Poland. The Communists did not know what to do with the situation. If they refused to offer an invitation, they would appear fearful of him. If they invited him to come, they might have a revolution on their hands. In the end, as you know, they had no choice but to reluctantly invite him.

When he went, he kissed the ground. Millions – literally millions – came out to hear him preach some of his most moving sermons. On the official Polish television reports of the Pope's visit, he was barely mentioned. When the average Polish citizen saw that, having experienced the electric messages, having seen the millions who turned out, Noonan says that this average Pole thought to himself, "It's over." Communism died when one Pole, then a million, ten million, thirty million thought, "It's over." John Paul II never raised a gun or lifted his arm, but a revolution began from the inside out.

3) And so it is with the kingdom of God. The world was in darkness, and Satan ruled the world. But at the cross Jesus, through His sacrifice, through the empowering of His people, lit a candle that could never be put out. It was over. How will America be won to Christ? Or India? Or the Middle East? Or China? From the inside out. One person, then a hundred, then a million, all saying in their hearts, "It's over; our God reigns."

This is how this prayer changes the world.

IV. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE KINGDOM OF SATAN. Paul wrote,

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

(Ephesians 6:12)

1) Lucifer is said to be the ruler of this world. We are not saying that Christ is not King of kings and Lord of lords or that His sovereignty is in any way diminished. We are only admitting that there is another kingdom.

- In *The City of God*, St. Augustine wrote that there are two cities – the city of God and the city of man – and they are at war with each other. Ever since Lucifer brought his diabolical schemes into humanity, it has been evident that there is a struggle.
- In Noah's day, there were two kingdoms, and God called Noah to build an Ark that would float the kingdom of God through the judgment on the kingdom of Satan. Noah preached righteousness, but the whole race of mankind desired the kingdom of Satan over the kingdom of God and was judged.

2) There is a struggle in your heart; there is territory unclaimed by Christ even in the lives of His people. Though Satan cannot have your soul, he seeks that one territory to hold. But Jesus is the bondage breaker. The kingdom of God is greater than the kingdom of Satan. Christ calls each of you to see the seducing city of man, the kingdom of Satan, in your own life and to turn from it and run to Him.

This is how this prayer changes the very course of the world.

V. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS MISSIONAL. The kingdom of God comes to destroy the kingdom of Satan. Paul believed that the gospel was at work in the world destroying Satan's kingdom.

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

(Romans 16:20)

1) In Matthew chapter 12, Jesus was attacked by religious leaders for casting out demons. It was charged that He had a demon. Jesus shows the absurdity of such a claim by saying that a kingdom divided cannot stand.

Each time Jesus healed a demoniac, liberated a soul enslaved to Satan, or encouraged a saint to go on and share the gospel in this world, He was plundering Satan's house.

- Today, every time a woman is shown God's grace and she receives forgiveness of sins, the kingdom comes.
- Every time a child, nourished in the gospel in his own home, comes to see that this gospel is not just Mom and Dad's salvation but his salvation, the kingdom comes.

The Bible says that Satan goes about roaring like a lion! And we know this is so in our own personal lives. But we also know something else, **". . .the ruler of this world is judged."** (John 16:11)

2) Philip Ryken, in his book on the Lord's Prayer, described the situation by comparing it to how the Allies defeated Nazi Germany in the 1940s.

"For all intents and purposes, World War II was over on D-Day when British and American troops established a beachhead in France. There were still battles to be fought, of course, and lives would be lost. But from that point on, the Nazis were fighting a losing battle. All that remains was for Allies to liberate Europe."

At the cross, the devil was defeated. Battles still rage across the earth and in the hearts of men and women and boys and girls, but Christ is victor. The war is won. The enemy is exposed and is losing ground, and Christ is gaining. The enemy will be vanquished. The whole book of Revelation could be summed up in two words: Jesus wins!

He won the day you surrendered to the grace and love of Jesus Christ and welcomed King Jesus to sit on the throne of your life. One by one the kingdom tears down the wall erected by the devil and his demons. Your prayer is being answered.

VI. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS PROGRESSING. The kingdom of God is going to burst forth in a new heaven and a new earth. When we pray "Your Kingdom come," we are praying for the fulfillment of the kingdom by the return of Christ and the restoration of all things. Paul wrote of that day,

"Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power." (I Corinthians 15:24)

This is the consummation of the kingdom. And this is the prayer that is changing the world.

1) It is a prayer that is crying out for that which C. S. Lewis captured so well in his book *The Last Battle*:

All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page; now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

This is what we are praying for.

2) Men of good will differ on how this will play out, but suffice it to say that as Jesus came once, He is coming again. When He does, the Kingdom will come in its fullness as all people name Jesus as Lord of lords and King of kings. Then, says Paul, Jesus shall hand over the kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all.

VII. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS RESPONSIVE. The very fact that Jesus instructs us to pray for the kingdom to come shows that His rule and reign in our lives and in our world is dependent upon our prayers.

The kingdom will come through prayer itself. This, in itself, is revolutionary. God ought to be able to bring in His kingdom without me, and He can. But he desires that I pray for it. Prayer becomes the engine of the kingdom of God.

When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we are praying for faith to see what is not yet here.

VIII. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS PERSONAL. We have learned what the Bible says about the kingdom of God and how this one prayer is literally changing the world. But this prayer is also the gospel for you who need forgiveness. It is the prayer for every person whose soul has unconquered territories – citadels of resistance -- that must give way to the loving

The teaching of the kingdom is imminent, immediate, personal, and urgent and requires your response today.

- Who among us will pray, "Your kingdom come" and really pray it with your very soul – to believe that Christ is answering?
- To do so is to pray a prayer that will change your world.