

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
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The Lord's Prayer (Part 2)

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:7-10

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Last week we began a series on the Lord's Prayer. The first petition begins with acknowledging who God is; *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*. Prayer begins with a right heart towards God. Today we will look at the second petition, found in Matthew.

⁹*Pray then in this way:*

¹⁰*Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

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Kingdom is a big word for Jesus. He talked more about the kingdom of God than any other subject. It's such a big word that he put it in this prayer.

It's an old word for us. We don't live in kingdoms, but we might understand the word *empire*. They're similar. There have been great empires in history that have been led by a king, or emperor.

The *Ottoman* Empire

The *Persian* and *Byzantine* empires

The *British, Roman, Russian* and *Mongol* empires

They all fell, even the Roman Empire that lasted 2,214 years! Some would say there is an American Empire, though we have no king, thanks to George Washington.

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Jesus taught his disciples to pray this prayer right in the midst of the Roman Empire; the empire that would eventually crucify him; the empire that would have no other "*king*." The plaque over his head on the cross read, "*King of the Jews*." That was his crime.

Kingdom is a big word for Jesus. The message of Christ ran counter-cultural to the political environment in which they found themselves. We tend to forget how radical Christianity is.

Emperor Constantine decriminalized Christianity in 313 AD and then made it the state church of the Roman Empire in 380 AD, annexing it into the empire. The good news was that more and more people became Christians, but Christianity became more and more enculturated. The lines between “Whose kingdom is whose?” became blurred.

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When you pray this prayer, you are praying for the government, rule, and authority of God to be pervasive over all other kingdoms, or empires. So can you be a loyal American and pray for another kingdom to come?

We actually have *dual citizenship*. Paul alludes to this in his letter to the Philippians (3:20). Our ultimate loyalty belongs to another kingdom, another empire, another government, to another king. Yet we are also citizens of the United States, Canada, Brazil or the United Kingdom.

These two citizenships are often in harmony, but at times may be at odds. It is in those times of conflict that every person must choose which master they will serve.

Some have done that at the cost of persecution; people like, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and every woman who has felt called to ordained ministry. **When the rules conflict with the values, who determines what is moral, and ethical, and right?**

All this is tied up in the word “*kingdom*.” Jesus is praying for God’s rule and domain to ultimately override all other rules and domains. If that is the case, then all earthly powers are to be submissive to God’s sovereignty and power.

So we say the words, “*In God we trust*.” Is that true, or are we simply asking God to bless our empire? That is not what this prayer says. It doesn’t say “*Bless our nation, and our nation only*.” It doesn’t even mention our nation, or any other nation or empire. It mentions the kingdom of God. Jesus said to pray for that kingdom to come.

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This “*little prayer*” is pretty radical when you unpack it. If God’s kingdom were to come, and God’s will were to be done, it would bring a sweep of radical changes to our lives, to the Church, to our politics, and to the economy; to how and where we spend our money. It would change me. It might even change you. There would be nothing untouched by the kingdom of God.

But it would be a mistake to dismiss this as something that will come in the future, at the end of life. It is to come here and now, “...*on earth as it is in heaven*.” “*On earth*” is pretty specific.

Clovis Chappell writes,

In praying this prayer, we are asking for a community into which Jesus would fit. We're asking for homes in which he could be entertained without embarrassment. We're asking for churches upon whose ministry he would look with approval. We are asking for a city whose streets he would walk without having his heart broken. We're asking for factories and places of business into which he could go without burning with indignation. We are asking for schools that would measure up to his demands. We are asking for amusements upon which he could smile. We are asking for literature that he could read without his eyes blurring with tears.

(Clovis Chappell, Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, p. 65)

This is a prayer asking that heaven might come to earth. This kingdom is actually happening all around us, all the time, and yet it has not come to its full completion.

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When we pray this petition of the prayer, we are sharing something at the very core of Jesus' heart. This was his *dream*. This was his *passion*. This was his *daily task*. This was, and is the heart of his teaching. To follow him is to make it *our dream, our passion, our daily task*, and the core of our heart and being. That's a different kind of life, a different kind of kingdom; one that has never fallen, and never will.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Congregation: **Amen**