

Praying for the Kingdom

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Date: 13 April 2025

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[0 : 00] Let's read together the Lord's Prayer from Matthew's Gospel. So that's found in Matthew chapter 6, verses 9 to 13. And Jesus teaches us to pray like this.

He says, Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. This is God's holy word. And it's good to see so many of you here tonight.

I'm really excited. Keep your Bibles open on the Lord's Prayer. Matthew chapter 6. We are going through the Lord's Prayer still, which is almost like a little series in another series.

You know, we're still in the Sermon on the Mount, but Jesus is now teaching the people the Lord's Prayer. Lewis was last week preaching on the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, our Father in heaven, and the comfort we find in that, that we are praying to our Father.

[1 : 09] And this time we're looking at the next verse, which is about the kingdom of God. Martin Lloyd-Jones, the famous Welsh preacher in the city of London in the 20th century, he writes this about the Lord's Prayer.

Any man who attempts to preach on the Lord's Prayer must surely find himself in great difficulties. There is a sense in which it's almost presumptuous to preach on it at all. One should simply repeat these phrases and meditate upon them and consider them from the heart.

For they themselves say everything. And the more I study this prayer, the more I believe that if only one used these phrases as our Lord intended them to be used, there is really nothing more to be said.

But on the other hand, he says, we're all frail and fallible. We're all sinful creatures. And the result is that we need to have these things analyzed and enforced.

So we'll try to do that a little bit today. We try to analyze and then enforce, apply to our hearts the words of the Lord's Prayer. But Martin Lloyd-Jones is giving us the application, the application in this series, right?

[2 : 18] It's a prayer. We have to pray the Lord's Prayer. It's something we can preach from, but if you don't pray it, then it doesn't really have any value. Verse 10, the kingdom of God.

It's a fairly short verse. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is on heaven. This verse talks about the kingdom of God. And the kingdom of God, I have to tell you, is one of the biggest themes that we find in all of Scripture.

During the summer, we had a sermon series called Kingdom Parables. So today I will try a little bit to explain what the kingdom of God is. But if you still want more explanation, you can go back on Spotify or on YouTube and listen to this sermon series on the kingdom, on parables about the kingdom.

Because Jesus gives us pictures to explain what the kingdom of God is like because it is not all that easy to say it in words. My sermon today is two parts, okay?

We will try to figure out what the kingdom of God is, and then we will try to figure out why we should pray for the kingdom. So let's start with the first. What is the kingdom of God? Sometimes it is helpful to look at words and where they come from because our English words and the biblical words, they are not always the same principles.

[3 : 42] So the word kingdom, we all know the word kingdom because if someone asks you, where do you live? You say, I live in Scotland or I live in the United Kingdom. So we associate the word kingdom with a place.

A kingdom is a place where a king rules. In the biblical languages, however, the word kingdom refers not only to a place, but it also refers to an action.

The word kingdom stuck with us from the King James Version and before that from William Tyndale's translations of the Bible. But in the biblical languages, it refers more to the activity of a king reigning over his people.

So we could say it means, the kingdom of God means, it is, or the kingdom of God is where God's will is done, where God reigns.

And that is why right after the first sentence in our verse, your kingdom come, we read, your will be done. It is two sides of the same coin.

[4 : 48] The kingdom of God is where God's will is done. And you see, the world had become a place where God's will hadn't been done.

It wasn't enforced. Therefore, Jesus is now announcing that God's reign has come. However, kingdom, this word kingdom, still assumes a place because if you say, okay, God's will is done, God is sovereign, God is ruling, then it still assumes that he's ruling over people somewhere, right? But if we look at the second part of this word kingdom, dem, you know, the, what do you say, suffix, prefix, I don't know. It's like boredom, you know, it's a state, it's a condition, the condition of being bored.

Now, kingdom is the condition of being kinged, of being ruled, of being reigned over. It's quite simple, the definition, admittedly, but maybe it's helpful to think about it like that.

The second thing I want to say is that the kingdom is the gospel. And what I mean by that is that in the Bible, we always talk about the gospel as the key message.

[5 : 59] But one scholar says that the kingdom of God is the idea that stitches the whole Bible together. And that's really helpful because it's true. From the first page in the Bible, Genesis 1, to the last page in the Bible, in the book of Revelations, we find this idea of the kingdom of God.

From the garden to the city, from Eden to New Jerusalem. And Jesus himself mentions the kingdom 80 times, I think, in the gospels. Which makes you think, okay, I thought the gospels, you know, the gospel of Jesus Christ, he lived, he died, he was raised again.

That is the main message. So why do I say the kingdom of God is the main message? Because it's one, it's the same thing. Even Jesus himself says, he uses the phrase, the gospel of the kingdom of God.

If you were here last Sunday morning, maybe you heard Corey preach on the question, what is the gospel? And he said something like, the gospel is good news.

It's an announcement. It's like a newspaper article announcing something, giving you news. The gospel is news of the return of the king.

[7 : 15] That finally, in the midst of chaos, there will be order. In the midst of violence, there will be peace. And in the midst of darkness, there will be light. The good news, the gospel is, that the kingdom of God has arrived.

Through the king, who comes in the middle of history to put things right again. The kingdom is the gospel. The whole Bible is about God's kingdom.

Thirdly, kingdom means dominion. Dominion is not a word we use often. in our day-to-day colloquial language. But it's throughout the whole Bible.

Again, it starts on the first page. Genesis 1, verse 26. We read about this word, dominion.

Interestingly, it's not about God having dominion, but it's about God giving us dominion.

So what we learn in that passage is actually that God wanted us to rule. So we read, God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish over the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

[8 : 31] So, we see that we have this dominion language right from the beginning of the Bible in the garden, not for God himself having dominion over us, but actually for us to rule over creation, intended in a very good way with responsibilities.

Why? Because we are image bearers of God. We get this royal task of ruling, of subduing the creation and caring for it. We are all cultivators.

We bring order into chaos. We are all gardeners in a way. We cultivate, we develop, we are supposed to reign over creation. We were given dominion.

Now, Richard Dawkins, the popular atheist, in his book *The God Delusion*, he says a lot of things about God, but one of the things he says is that God is an unforgiving control freak. But in Genesis 1, we see God giving dominion over nature and over animals to human beings. God makes Adam and Eve co-rulers over his kingdom.

[9 : 45] He gives them the ability to choose between right and wrong. So, is that a control freak? Is that what a control freak does? I don't think so. The problem is not that God is a control freak.

The problem is that we as human beings, we want to set up our own kingdom. We didn't want to share with God. We wanted to be God ourselves.

So, we had to leave the kingdom to set up our own kingdom. And now, the other part of Dawkins' claim, he says, God is unforgiving. That is not true.

The rest of the Bible, after the first three chapters, is the story about how God is trying to save us from ourselves, from our own kingdom that has gone wrong again, and again, and again, culminating in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, becoming human himself, leaving his glory, writing himself into history, and dying for our sin, dying for our rebellion, dying for the fact that we weren't satisfied with ruling alongside God.

God wants to say, come back to the kingdom. Now, the problem is we can't do that. We have left the kingdom. We are sinful. Sin is not permitting us to come back to him. So what did he do?

[11 : 09] He sent his own son. He sent Jesus Christ. And what did Jesus do? He took all the sin on himself. He became the sin that was keeping us from entering the kingdom of God so that we might enter.

He became the outsider. He became the outcast. He left the city so that we might enter the kingdom of God. That is, today is Palm Sunday.

A lot of churches are celebrating Palm Sunday. What do we do? What do we read about in the Bible on Palm Sunday? Jesus entering Jerusalem. He's received like a king. And a few days later, he's crucified with a crown of thorns.

Outside of the city, he is left at becoming the sin so that we might enter it. fourthly, the kingdom is already but not yet.

Maybe you've heard this before if you've been to church for a while. If you grew up in church, you've heard people talking about the already but not yet. It's weird, isn't it, that we read in the Gospels that Jesus says the kingdom of God is at hand.

[12 : 19] It has arrived, but in the Lord's prayer, he tells us to pray for it. How can that be? And honestly, that can be confusing, but it just shows you how the kingdom of God is a very complex idea, that it's multi-layered, that there are many aspects to it, and one of those aspects is time.

Because, as I said, we read that the kingdom of God is here, but also that there is so much more to come. Theologians, therefore, speak about the kingdom of God having been inaugurated already. It's been established. It is here, through Jesus Christ. However, it is not yet fully realized, not yet fully consummated. So, we live in the present, knowing that we can be part of this kingdom if we repent and believe, and also, that there is something more to come.

A reality in which Christ will sit on the throne, ruling over new creation. Some people have compared it to D-Day and V-Day.

So, in the Second World War, you had D-Day, which is when the Allies said, we will free Europe, and they've sent their soldiers, and they landed on the beaches in France. And then, one year later, you had V-Day, when the actual victory was accomplished.

[13 : 39] It was already decided the war was going to end, but the actual victory came a year later. So, it's a bit like that. We live in the here and now. We're cleansed from our sin.

We're able to choose the right thing, yet we still live in a fallen world, and the battle is still going on around us, so we still fall into sin. We live in the understanding that we have eternal life in Jesus Christ, yet we are still surrounded by death.

We know that one day all tears will be wiped away, yet we mourn, and we grieve, and we shed tears as this life brings us suffering and troubles. Yet we have the promise that one day that will all be done away with.

And that is unbelievable and difficult sometimes to fully realize, to wrap our heads around. It seems too good to be true almost, even so good that a lot of people have struggled to see it.

Friedrich Nietzsche, I'm not the only one who quotes German thinkers from this pulpit. We've heard a lot of Nietzsche and other people lately. Nietzsche says this, the kingdom of heaven is a condition

of the heart.

[14:53] Is that correct? Would we agree? I think to a degree, yes. The kingdom of heaven is a condition of the heart. If God rules in your heart, that's a good thing. Then the kingdom of heaven is within you. And here he goes wrong, because what he says next is, it is not something that comes above the earth or after death.

And that's where Nietzsche is wrong, because it will be. It is promised. God has promised that we will one day see him face to face.

It's the already but not yet. Karl Marx says, religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world. It's the opium of the people. Karl Marx said, it's the opium of the people.

Why? Because he sees that religion, it helps people. Somehow it gives them strength to keep on in this cruel world. For him, of course, it's just a distraction of his cause of social liberation.

But what he fails to see is that actually it's not just opium. It's the medicine that gives you healing. It's a true hope. It is something so much bigger than just a nice idea.

[16:02] It is real. Secondly, why should we pray for the kingdom to come? I've tried to come up with a list of ideas and reasons why we should pray for the kingdom of God to come.

And the first reason is this, because Jesus tells us so. Jesus tells us to pray for it because it is for our good, ultimately. That's the first reason.

Second reason, Sinclair Ferguson, the great Scottish theologian, he says, out of love for him and our concern for his glory, we pray that his kingdom will come out of love for God and out of our own concern for his glory.

As I said, we already live in the kingdom, yet its final flowing is still awaited. We therefore pray that the kingdom that has already been established will express its presence more and more throughout the earth, he writes, until the day comes when the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.

It's about God's glory, about God's glory. Thirdly, we should pray for the kingdom so that the kingdom grows within our own hearts and so that we submit to God's will.

[17:36] Praying for the kingdom will bring the idea of the kingdom into our minds. It will make us kingdom-minded people. Praying for the kingdom will make you see the world around you with different eyes, through a different lens.

Why? One of the main purposes of prayer is not to ask God the Father to change his will, but actually to submit to his will.

It's a warming up to the promises he has given us. It's an act of accepting and submitting to God, to the hard things that we are walking through, in the knowledge that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Tim Keller writes about this. He says, Jesus submitted to the Father's will, under circumstances far more crushing than any of us will ever face.

Jesus admitted to his Father's will rather than following his own desires, and it saved us. That's why we can trust him. Jesus is not asking us to do anything for him that he hasn't already done for us.

[18:52] Under conditions of difficulty, beyond our comprehension. You see, we can trust Jesus when he says, pray for the kingdom, submit to his will.

Without this trust, what happens? We will try to take God's place, and we will pray, my kingdom come, my will be done, on earth as it is in my imagination.

You know? But if you see, if we pray for the kingdom to come, we are aware that if God would have given us what we deserved, then none of us would be part of his kingdom.

We submit to his will. And actually, we want to love his will. Submission is not going far enough. I know some of you here submit to his will and do his will.

We all try to do that as a Christian family together, but not all of us love his will. And that's difficult. It's difficult to love God's will. But that is the idea of this prayer, to warm up to that.

[19:56] Your will be done. Jesus praying in the garden, kneeling down. If you can, let this cup pass. But if not, then your will be done.

Your will be done. Why else? Why should we pray for the kingdom of God? As an encouragement for us, it reminds us of our identity in Christ, that we are adopted, that we are accepted, and that we are loved.

It helps our assurance. It frees us from our doubts. If we pray this prayer and preach to ourself that the kingdom will come, that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

C.S. Lewis says that often we are satisfied with playing in mud puddles because we can't imagine what a holiday at the beach would look like. Sometimes this idea of heaven to come, the kingdom of God seems too good to be true.

But if we pray for the kingdom to come, we remind ourselves and we preach to ourselves the reality of God's will to come even more and even better than what it is now.

[21 : 10] In Lord of the Rings, in the third book or third movie, depending on whether you read or watch it, I mean all of us have read or watched it, I hope, we get this illustration.

We get Aragorn and he is the king of Gondor and the book is giving us him as an illustration of what a just king looks like, a humble king, a kind king, powerful, wise, worthy.

And all of that is just a mere glimpse of what the true king Jesus is like. Now the difference between Aragorn and Jesus is this. Aragorn is fictional.

Jesus Christ isn't. Jesus Christ is the king who will return and then the world will see and know. And when we pray for the kingdom to come, we are praying for God's upside down kingdom to come.

Remember, the kingdom is good news. It's the gospel. I say upside down kingdom because in God's kingdom, the king is the servant. In God's kingdom, tears are wiped away.

[22 : 16] In God's kingdom, the judge becomes the one who is judged. The sad will be happy. The desperate will be joyful. Anger will become kindness. Sin will be done away with.

Selfishness will not exist and love will rule. And it's already here. The prince of peace will sit on his throne of mercy and he will wipe away our tears.

We should pray for the kingdom of God, for our own sanctification as well. We are promised in the Bible that we will be co-heirs with Christ.

We are, if we believe, if we repent and believe in Jesus Christ, we are his brothers, which means we are adopted. We are part of God's family.

We are sons and daughters of the king. When I was a child, my mom used to read stories to me before I go to bed. And this is one story. And I tried to translate the title.

[23 : 15] It's a bit wooden. But it's something like Not Like With Robbers. Okay. Now, it is a story about two children, Tom and Jenny. And they live with robbers in a den.

And it's dirty there. It's not nice. The robbers aren't really nice to them. They're just being brought up there. They don't really have nice clothes. When there is food, they just have to get as much as they can, stuff it in their pockets, run into the corn and eat it there so nobody steals it away from them.

And one day this man comes and he goes to the robbers and says, I want these two children and I want them to come with me to my house. I will care for them. And the robbers say, ah, they're not good for anything.

But yeah, they take his money and the children go with him. And the next day they wake up and they are in a palace. And it turns out the king came and bought them and redeemed them. And what happens?

Tom wakes up and he goes into the kitchen. There's a big table and there are other children sitting there and eating. And he runs to the table and it's full with good food and he steals the food and he runs away into his corner and eats it, kind of like trying to make sure nobody steals his food.

[24 : 26] And nobody, nobody's even trying to. The kids, they come over to him and they say, what are you doing? You can come sit at the table with us. It's okay. And all of them are kind and loving and Tom doesn't understand why that is.

But the reason why that is is because there's enough food. There's enough of everything. They live in a palace and they're the children of the king. And that shows in how they act and how they behave.

So what I'm saying is that we are princes and princesses in a way. We are children of the highest king. Therefore, the Bible says we should behave like that as well.

God bought us with a price. He clothed us with the robe of righteousness. He sees you and he says, my son died for you. You are adopted. It's a huge privilege.

Praying for the kingdom should remind us that we are co-heirs, co-heirs, it's hard to say for me, co-heirs with Christ. We are his children. Lastly, we should pray because it will be heaven on earth.

[25 : 32] It's for our consolation. I know that many of us are struggling with difficult situations in life, with the loss of loved ones, with sickness, with suffering that is unexpected, with a lot of different things.

Listen to what John writes in the book of Revelation. He says, then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, look, God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them.

They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

We should pray for the kingdom of God. We should look at the king on the cross with the crown of thorns on his head, becoming the outsider, the outcast, so that we may enter.

[26 : 49] Have you been struggling lately to pray? Have you been struggling to think about the kingdom of God? Have you been struggling to pray for the kingdom of God? I hope that I'm able to help you a little bit with this, to be excited for the kingdom of God.

The only reason I see not to be excited about the kingdom of God is if you're not sure if you're in it, if you're not sure if you can enter. So my question to you is tonight, would you consider what I've just talked about?

Would you consider the kingdom of God not out of fear, not because you need some sort of opium to distract you from your pain, but because God is actually offering you to become part of his family and part of his kingdom?

Do you feel like you're not in the kingdom? Then listen to the king as he says, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Do you feel bored?

Do you feel without purpose? Then look to Jesus Christ who offers you his hand so you can help expand his kingdom. We are to pray for the kingdom because it's the gospel.

[28 : 01] It's the good news that things are being made right again by the servant king who in the middle of history became a human being just like us to fulfill what we as image bearers couldn't fulfill.

And he will reign forever and ever. We are praying for the king to return. That's the good news today. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, it's like Martin Lloyd Jones says that we are overwhelmed with the truths and the depth that we find in scripture and even in the Lord's prayer, even in just one verse.

So we ask, would you with your Holy Spirit move in our hearts? Would you help us to understand what it means to pray for you? the kingdom? Would you help us to become kingdom-minded people, to be peacemakers and to seek justice and to love our neighbors well, just like Jesus did? Would you help us to become more like him every day? In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Amen.