

INTRODUCTION

Our Scripture reading this morning is taken once again from **The Gospel of Matthew chapter 6 and verses 9-13. Matthew 6**, and we'll begin reading in **verse 9**. Let us now hear God's Word. **(READ)**

THE BRIDGE

Today, in continuing our studies of **The Lord's Prayer**, we'll be focusing on the second petition of the prayer...**Our Father in Heaven, Your Kingdom come**. And the question is...*What are we asking? What are we praying when we address these words to our Heavenly Father?*

THE BACKGROUND TO GOD'S COMING KINGDOM

Well to answer that, **the first thing** I want us to consider is...**The Biblical Background to God's Coming Kingdom**.

And in doing this, here's what we need to grasp: That's God's eternal plan was to have this creation as his Kingdom; to have this creation as the primary place of his royal presence, the place where he'd exercise his good and glorious reign. And we see this in the **early chapters of Genesis** when we're first introduced to God as **The Great Creator King**, the King who's utterly distinct from his creation, who doesn't need his creation in any way, and yet because he's the Creator, he is intimately connected to and concerned for his creation. For God called this world into being for the purpose of manifesting his eternal glory, the glory of his goodness and generosity. God, the great High King, formed and fashioned heaven and earth to be the theater from which we might gain a glimpse and have share in his eternally joyfully and peace-filled life, the life that has always existed between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And in **Genesis 1 and 2** we see God as King in various ways.

- We see him as **The Sovereign King** who simply utters his breath and speaks his word and the world comes into existence, obeying his command.
- We see him as **The Architect and Builder King**...the King who orders and organizes his creation rhythmically and precisely.
- We see him as **The Generous King** who abundantly fills his creation with his own life and love and beauty.
- We see him as **The Good King** who in looking upon his creation declares...**It is very good**, for creation itself reflects his own eternal goodness.
- And we also see God as **The Satisfied King**, the King who after finishing his work of creation rested, not because he was tired, but because he was satisfied with what he'd made, so satisfied that he sits back in a sort of regal repose of joy and delight in what he'd crafted.

The God of the Bible is The Great Creator King, the King who loves his creation, rejoices in his creation, who's utterly committed to his creation, for he made creation to be the home of his Kingdom, where his good rule would be *expressed* and *experienced*. As strange as it may sound to our over-spiritualized ears...God desires this physical earth, this material cosmos to be his dwelling place and Kingdom.

And central to this amazing reality is this...**That God entrusted his Kingdom, his creation to humanity**, to the ones...**he formed and fashioned in his own image so as to grow in his likeness**. At creation, God gave to humanity, above all other creatures, an unparalleled dignity and significance. At creation, and we read this in **Psalms 8**...

- **God crowned humanity with glory and honor**

- **He gave humanity dominion over his works**
- **He put all things under humanity's feet, all animals, birds and fish, for all of creation was put under rule of humanity, who themselves were to rule under God.**

And what's amazing about this is that each of these things (the crown, the glory, the honor, the dominion and the rule)...each of these things are things that belong inherently to God himself. Yet at creation, God gifted these things to humanity...to be steward by humanity in love, in wisdom, in faithfulness and in grateful dependence. God created us like himself, so that we could know him and in knowing him, we could share in his life so as to reflect his life, so that humanity could reflect his glorious reign in and through their submissive reign.

In the beginning, God created us to be little kings and queens of creation. And as his little kings and queens he placed us in the middle. He placed humanity between himself and the rest of his creation, so that from the middle the lives of humans might sing out: **O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth, for your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.** We were made for God's Kingdom, to find our life, our joy and our purpose in his Kingdom, for we were made for communion with God, a communion that was to be characterized by listening and loyalty and love. Which means, we were made to find our life and freedom not in independence, but in absolute dependence upon our Divine King. For humanity has no life in themselves. No, our life is derived from God who is life, and therefore, only in his life can humanity flourish, and by the same token, only as humanity remains in communion with God will God's reign fill this earth through his little kings and queens.

But that's where the tragedy of creation comes in, for rather than living dependently upon the King and his Kingdom, humanity sought to construct and live for their own kingdom. In arrogance, humanity believed they could live autonomously, that is, as rule unto themselves, and as a result, humanity turned their back on God and his good creational design, his design that promised life and love, peace and true prosperity. For rather than clinging to God, humanity chose to cling to a tree, to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which God forbade, and as a result, all humanity fell. And in the fall of humanity, all of creation suffered, for if the ones created to reflect God's Kingdom don't work right then creation can no longer work right. And in **Genesis 3** we see the tragedy of the fall as we watch humanity, the ones created to rule over creation, to rule over the animals, being dressed up like animals, as they depart from the good garden God had planted for them. Departing not with a songs proclaiming God's reign, but departing with songs of sin and shame, songs of heartache now sung in a world filled with thorns and thistles, pain and perplexity, disaster, disease and death. As a result of human rebellion, God's Kingdom was no longer prevalent in the world.

But thanks be to God that humanity's fall wasn't the end, for our rebellion against the Great High King didn't exhaust his inexhaustible care and commitment to humanity and to his wider creation. For even we're faithless, God remains faithful. And in his faithfulness, in his commitment the Divine King promised to come after us. And throughout the rest of the Old Testament we hear marvelous promises concerning the way God would come *personally* to renew humanity so as to re-establish his Kingdom on earth.

For example we hear in **Isaiah chapter 52...How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news (who brings gospel), who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."**

Or from **The Prophet Zechariah** when he says in **chapter 9...Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he...he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.**

The gospel of the Old Testament is that God hasn't abandoned his eternal purpose. He hasn't forsaken humanity or this physical creation. Rather, God promised to come in order to set up his Kingdom once again. His Kingdom that will root up the thorns of pain and replace them with flowers of peace, that will remove sin so to gift us with forgiveness and that'll destroy death in order to establish life...with a communion of life with God in his Kingdom.

For throughout the Old Testament, God spoke his coming Kingdom; and in so doing, the Old Testament looked forward to the day when God, the Great Creator King, who's also the Great Redeemer King, would arrive on earth. And seen in this way, the entire Old Testament is like a beautiful mosaic that gives us a picture of the coming King and his Kingdom, of the Great Creator King coming personally to a broken and needy humanity.

THE ARRIVAL OF GOD'S COMING KINGDOM

But it's not until the New Testament that this mosaic of the King and his Kingdom becomes a reality, for in the New Testament, and in particular in the Gospels, we see and hear that...**God's Coming Kingdom had Actually Arrived**, arrived in Jesus.

For example, in **The Gospel of Mark**, we hear Jesus' very first sermon, where he proclaimed...**The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.** In Jesus, God's Kingdom came to earth. The Kingdom was at hand because the King himself, God himself had come near personally, came enfleshed in our own humanity in the person of Jesus. For Jesus not only proclaimed the Kingdom, he embodied the Kingdom in his own person, for Jesus is the Divine King. He's God's Eternal Son, the Eternal Image of the Father, the One in who's image we're been made. And in time, God's own Eternal Image became an image, a human image, so as to restore the image of God in us. Jesus is the Divine and human King, and throughout his life and ministry we see Jesus the King inaugurating God's Kingdom on earth.

We see him doing this through...**his commanding word**, his word that calmed storms and freed captives from the degrading dehumanization of the devil. That's why he could say as he does in **Luke chapter 11...If by the finger of God I cast out demons then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.** Jesus' continual victory over satan and his continual control over creation were signs that the Kingdom of God was truly at hand.

We also see how God's Kingdom arrived in...**Jesus' daily teaching.** For the majority of Jesus' parables concerned God's Kingdom...

- of how God's Kingdom was coming like a sower planting seed that would eventually yield a large crop,
- of how his Kingdom was like a small amount of leaven infiltrating the whole in order to make the whole new, (and)
- of how God's Kingdom was like a party or wedding celebration filled with joy...the joy of Heaven and earth being reconciled

We also see that the coming Kingdom of God had arrived in...*Jesus' healings*, in his works of restoration, in his giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, movement to the lame and life to the dead. At their core, Jesus' miracles were manifestations of the reality that God's Kingdom had broken into our broken world in order to break the reign of sin and evil and injustice and death. In the coming of Jesus, God's Kingdom arrived on earth.

But here's the amazing surprise of God's coming Kingdom. And it's this: If God's Kingdom was to be truly established on earth then Jesus the King must do more than simply speak about it and show it. No, if the Kingdom was going to be truly planted in this world, planted our hearts and lives, then the King himself must die. He must lay down his life for his rebellious people. He must suffer the full effects and consequences of our fallenness in his own person. He must die that we might live. He must be shamed that we might be restored. He must be judged that we might be forgiven and freed from the guilt of our sin. For only through the cross could the Kingdom of God truly come...come at Jesus' own expense and at the cost of his own reputation. For Jesus the King came after us in love, and as a human, he gave up all for us on the cross. He went into death, our death, so as to conquer death. And he did all this so that the glory humanity lost at the Fall might be restored to us. We could put it this way: In grace, Jesus the King willingly hung on a tree wearing the crown of thorns that in him we might wear his crown of glory. Jesus, the Eternal Image of the Father embraced our tainted image. He embraced our broken humanity that we in faith we might embrace his divinity; that we might once again be brought into communion with our Divine King, the Divine King who descended into the dust of our death that we might share in his life now and forever.

Now here's the question...*Have you entered his Kingdom?* And how does one enter? Well, by heeding Jesus' call to turn and trust, to turn from all our self-centered and sin-saturated kingdoms, kingdoms of dust headed toward death in order to trust in him, to trust that he's better, better than even life itself, for he the King is everlasting life. We could put it this way...to enter God's Kingdom means clinging to another tree, to the tree of the cross, which is truly the Tree of Life, the life of God's Kingdom that's come through the sacrificial death of Jesus. For in Jesus, God's Kingdom has come and one day it will come in full, and even now, it's continuing to come in and through those who look to Jesus in love and loyalty. Have you entered God's Kingdom?

PRAYING FOR THE COMING OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Well if you have then central to life in his Kingdom is *the vocation of prayer*, of praying...**Our Father in Heaven, May Your Kingdom Come on Earth as it is Heaven.** And what does this vocation of prayer look like? What does it look like to pray this second petition of the Lord's Prayer?

Well it *first of all*, it means praying this petition...*honestly*. Yes, God's Kingdom has come in Jesus and yes, it's spreading as more and more people come to confess Jesus as King. But the reality is God's Kingdom hasn't yet come in full and therefore we still live in a broken and brutal world, a world filled with hatred and hostility, a world filled with pain and perplexity that's not only out there, but that's in here as well. We still live in a world that doesn't work right, and where we don't work right. And as followers of Jesus we're never given the option of ignoring the brokenness. No, we're to notice it and we're to be brutally honest about it. And we're to do this not in resignation or with cynicism, but with tears...prayerful tears that not only acknowledge the awful effects of sin and death, but that cry out...May your Kingdom come. May the strength of your Kingdom be seen in our weakness and may the love of your Kingdom call us and our world to repentance, to turning and trusting in Jesus.

In praying this petition, we're to take the pain of our lives, of our neighbors, of our families and of the wider world; to take the present pain and perplexity of this virus into the presence of God in order to say to him...Shine the light of your Kingdom in our present darkness. Shape us into a people who bear witness to your coming Kingdom, who bear witness to it wisely and faithfully and without fear. May your Kingdom come more and more in this still broken world, for your Kingdom is what we and this world needs most.

Secondly, it means praying this petition...**hopefully**, by joining our voices with the Apostle John who prays at the end of **Revelation...Come quickly, Lord Jesus!** My friends, Christianity isn't an escape from this world. No, it's longing for this world and our lives to be fully restored. And this can and will happen in full when Jesus returns, when our King comes once again to this earth, for this is our Christian hope...that Heaven will come down to earth and God will make his dwelling among us in order to wipe away every tear and remove all sin and sorrow from us and from his world. We're to pray hopefully because one day death itself will be no more...it'll be no more when God's Kingdom comes in full; and on that day all sin will be eradicated, all evil will be undone, all wrongs will be righted and God, our God will be all in all. To pray your Kingdom come is to pray in the present expectantly, putting our hope not on the now, but on God's Kingdom to come. For in Christ we're a people who can pray and proclaim the words of **Revelation 11.15**, which say that...**The kingdom of the world has and will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ who will reign forever and ever.**

And then **lastly** we're to pray this petition...**personally** in that we're to say to God...

- Father, May Your Kingdom come starting with me that I may learn to be a faithful citizen of your Kingdom.
- Father, start with me...that I may truly seek your Kingdom above all things and that I may not betray your Kingdom in my words or actions, or in my thoughts and or with my body
- Father, start with me that I may be the husband or wife, the parent or the child, the co-worker and neighbor you've called me to be in this world
- Father, start with me that by your grace and power, I may begin to order my life in accordance with your Kingdom way, which in Christ is shown to be the way not of self-centeredness, but of sacrificial and self-giving love. For at the heart of Jesus' Kingdom is the cross, and we've received this cross in order to lift the cross high in our lives. Father, not my kingdom, but your kingdom come in me.

CONCLUSION

Is that your prayer? Is that your desire? Are you rightly related to God's Kingdom, his Kingdom that came and will come in Jesus? For in Jesus, we've been invited into God's Kingdom of life and love and by the Spirit of Jesus, we've been called to embody his Kingdom as his image bearers in the world, image bearers who pray with our lips and lives...**Our Father in Heaven, not my kingdom, but your Kingdom come.**