

SERMON: MATTHEW 6:9-13 and LUKE 11:2-4**THE FATHER'S KINGDOM COMES**

Our Father Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. (COMMON WORDING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.)

What does (did) your father do for a living? Answers will vary: Rancher, farmer, teacher, small business operator, mechanic, etc. What about your heavenly Father who adopted you into His family through Christ? Answer: "My Father is King." Awesome, right? My Father is King! Yet we do not address Him as "Your Majesty" or "Your Excellency"; but as "Father" or "Dad," as we do in the Lord's Prayer.

In the First Petition (Request) of the Lord's Prayer, which we studied last week, we asked our dear Father and King to see to it that we "hallow" or "honor" His name. 1) That we do not misuse His names, His identity labels—"God this" and "Christ that." 2) That we do not dishonor His good-name and reputation—by playing fast and loose with what the Bible says about Him, by teaching or condoning false doctrine and the devil's lies about Him. 3) That we do not dishonor His good-name and reputation with actions and words contrary to His will and desire—as a son or daughter can make their parents look bad with bad behavior.

In the Second Petition (Request), we speak to our Father about His Kingdom. The petition is not simply a statement of fact—"Father, Your Kingdom is coming." We saw last week that the First Petition is not simply a statement of fact "Your name is hallowed / holy / honored." These petitions, like the rest, are requests. We ask, "Father, make it happen that Your name be honored. Father, make it happen that Your Kingdom comes."

What, then, are we asking? That our Father's Kingdom come to Him? No. He is already King of kings, and Lord of lords (and has always been)! We are asking that our Father's Kingdom come to us! This is a request for our welfare, not His. I suppose that many Christians often understand this request in terms of "Father, let heaven come to us / bring us to heaven. Father, let this sad world reach its end, let sin and corruption come to an end, let us enjoy the bliss and happiness of heaven--the sooner the better!" That is not an incorrect understanding of the Second Petition, but the Second Petition is much bigger than just that.

Let's start with the concept of the *Kingdom*. What is God's *kingdom*? What does He rule over as king? Certainly He is king of EVERYTHING—earth with all its contents, all of which He made; the solar system, the heavens, the universe and all that is in them, all of which He made. Indeed He is King of every physical thing. But we are not praying, "Father, let this physical creation/ kingdom of Yours come to us," as in "We want it all." That is hardly something Jesus would teach us to ask!

What is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of our Father is beyond the *physical*. Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world; if it were, my servants would fight" (John 18:36). It is *spiritual!* Which explains why you—right now—are a member of Christ's Kingdom, while an unbeliever is not even though you both live in God's physical world. "The Kingdom of God is within you," Jesus said. It is a *spiritual* Kingdom. It is God's rule in your heart.

How does a person become part of this spiritual Kingdom? Christian repentance. 1) Recognizing that your sin in your heart and life displeases Him and separates you from Him. 2) Trusting that in His Son, the crucified and risen Jesus, your Savior, your sin and guilt are removed. By faith in Christ, you are accepted into God's Kingdom and Family. "You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). Christ, the holy Son of God, "was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities; the punishment for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). By faith in Jesus you have righteousness before God and adoption into His family and Kingdom. The unbeliever does not.

Do not trust in yourself—that is a dead end. God does not accept you, for example, because you strive to "treat others right." You would have to "treat others right" 100% perfectly—perfectly! For "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet offends in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). But through Jesus "A man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

God's Kingdom is His ruling all believers in Christ, those who cling to Jesus for forgiveness and eternal rescue and salvation. God's Kingdom is the Holy Christian Church, that invisible entity and kingdom of all believers of all time. Thus we are part of that Kingdom and Church already here on earth, and later in heaven. When we pray "Thy Kingdom come" we are asking our Father to bring us and others into His family of believers, into The Church, right now, to make us safe now, and forever. We are asking our Father to build us up, to strengthen our grip, on Christ our Savior.

How does that happen? Does God somehow medicate your (or anybody's) *water*, to draw you closer to Jesus? Does He "zap" you during the night so that the next day you are stronger than ever in your relationship with Him? No. God uses means, "tools," "instruments." That wonderful message of Christ comes to you *by the means of His Word*, the Bible. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing *by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:17). Through the Bible's message—and that message is the message of Christ your Savior from sin and death—you are influenced by something bigger than yourself. God the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God, whether you are reading it yourself, or someone else is explaining it to you. God the Holy Spirit works through that Word and brings people to faith and strengthens people in faith. Paul says the Gospel (the Good Message) of Christ's "the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes . . . for therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, . . . the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16-17). God works in the Word of salvation. "No one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:3). To cut yourself off from the Word is spiritual suicide. It is walking away from the Means to enter God's Kingdom.

Thus, in this petition we are asking our Father to keep us in His Kingdom by keeping us in the Word, so that we live as His children and family now and then in eternity in heaven.

But in this petition, we are also praying that God's Kingdom comes to others, that the message and Word of Christ the Savior be shared with others so that through it the Holy Spirit works in their hearts also and brings them into His Kingdom. A fitting verse for Mission Festival Sunday! In fact, the Second Petition is sometimes called the "Mission Petition." We are praying "Father, see to it that your Kingdom comes through us to others! Father, may we who are served and saved by Your Son, also serve others and take the saving message to them as well."

Around the world there are those who in the blindness of Satan worship wood and stone—be it statues of Buddha, household gods, etc. "Father, help us to take the Message of Jesus to them." It is not easily done. It takes resources. "Father, move us to use our resources, really Your resources, to bring this Kingdom to others. Jesus commanded His disciples and His church to "Go, make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19-20). He is also talking to you and to me. Only the hardest of the hard would say, "No concern of mine. Let them perish." We see in this passage that baptism is likewise one of the Means of Grace, a means by which water and the Word bring a washing away of sin. "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sin," (Acts 22:16).

Then there are those in the world who do not worship wood and stone, but some other weak concept of God, which is not the God of forgiveness and mercy in Christ—be it Allah of the Muslims/Mohammedans, or the Great Spirit of our native neighbors. We pray for them. We pray that God's Kingdom comes to those of our own culture who have made something else god—wealth, prestige, recreation, do-good-ism. Scripture is clear that any concept of God without Christ the Savior is useless. "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:23). "Father, bring to others, help us bring to others, the message of Jesus, so that by faith they are members of Your Kingdom of mercy and forgiveness.

We also pray for our own congregation, our own families, and our extended families. "Father, those who have been taught Your message of Christ, but have grown careless and weak, who are drifting away from Your Word—work in their hearts also. Help them, help us to help them with the best news in all the world. Those who are troubled and beset by sin, those who are lost and wandering, those who are entrapped by chemical influences, those who are misled by ideas and philosophies of the world pushed by the devil to entice them away from God's Kingdom in Christ—help us to help them." Satan works in our own families and in St. Luke's as well as elsewhere.

"Father, Your Kingdom come to us all. Help us to be *mission* minded carrying the Message of Jesus with us every day. Through faith in Your Son, heaven awaits us all."

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther (of Germany 500 years ago,) wrote: "The Second Petition—Thy Kingdom come. *What does this mean?* God's Kingdom certainly comes by itself, indeed without our prayer (without our asking), but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also. *How is this done?* When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead a godly life here on earth and hereafter in heaven!"

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach--