

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven

Luke 11:1-4

He (Jesus) was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father,^[a] hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.^[b] Give us each day our daily bread.^[c] And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”^[d]

Footnotes:

- a. Luke 11:2 Other ancient authorities read *Our Father in heaven*
- b. Luke 11:2 A few ancient authorities read *Your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.* Other ancient authorities add *Your will be done, on earth as in heaven*
- c. Luke 11:3 Or *our bread for tomorrow*
- d. Luke 11:4 Or *us into temptation.* Other ancient authorities add *but rescue us from the evil one (or from evil)*

This week, we have Jesus giving the Lord’s Prayer in Luke in this passage. A little different setting than Matthew. The prayer is also somewhat different. Sometimes we get a little too wrapped up in which words of the Lord’s Prayer we use today. We see here, from scripture, that it is not so much the exact words that make the prayer. The two versions in the Gospels don’t agree. It is more the intent behind the words. We should be comfortable using a wide variety of forms of the Lord’s Prayer, so that we are able to join the community we are in at the time, in the form that community has chosen, instead of forcing our own words on someone else. Remember, it’s not our prayer. As in Matthew’s version, we see that there is an eschatological direction to the petitions. A direction that points to a fulfilled Kingdom. Yet, as is consistent with the entire Gospel of Luke, the concerns registered in the prayer relate to everyday life, here and now.

Martin Luther writes in the Small Catechism, “May your kingdom come. What is this? Answer: In fact, God’s Kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us. How does this come about? Whenever our heavenly Father gives us the Holy Spirit, so that through his grace we believe his Holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.” Luther goes on to ask, “May your will be done on earth as in heaven.

What is this? In fact, God's good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us. How does this come about? Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will – as are present in the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh – that would not allow us to hallow God's name and would prevent the coming of his Kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his Word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is his gracious and good will." Luther expounds on these thoughts in the Large Catechism, "We see that God doesn't need us to make God's Kingdom Come and for God's will to be done. We are praying that God include us in this action, in this kingdom, in God's will. We are included when we renounce the thoughts, words, and deeds that are not consistent with what God calls us to think, say, do and be. We are included when we actively do the work of the kingdom, as told to us by the Word of God, as found in Christ, as found in the Gospel of Christ, as found in God's written word, and as communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. We are included when we do the will of God, and not our own will. We are included when we bring heaven and all the implications of the kingdom of heaven, here to earth."¹

Jesus teaches us in this prayer, that we are to seek God's kingdom first, before we make any requests, petitions or prayers for ourselves. The petition, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" comes before the petitions for daily bread, forgiving sins, save us from the time of trial and delivering us from evil. Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Jesus teaches to focus on God's will rather than our own needs. And we need to understand God's Kingdom, before we are able to understand God's Will.²

Thy Kingdom Come – Notice that we do not pray, in this prayer, "Bless our Nation", or "Let my side win", or any other self-centered request. We pray, "Thy Kingdom Come." Jesus is inviting us to join the kingdom that he is establishing. This is a real kingdom. And we are called to live in it. What Jesus teaches us is that every aspect of our lives: our politics, our wealth, our material possessions, our work, our leisure, our play, our social concerns, how we treat others, our stewardship, everything....., is a spiritual matter. How we deal with all of these things, need to fit into the kingdom that we profess to be workers in. We are called to give up our perceived power and control power of working for what we think, and align ourselves with what God expects to see happening and what God thinks, through God's real power and control. Here is the struggle: we don't want to give up power and control, we want it our way, and our words and deeds show it isn't about God. All the worldly kingdoms and workers in worldly kingdoms don't want to give up power and control. God doesn't try to bring about God's kingdom by converting other worldly kingdoms. God sets us a new kingdom, and expects everyone to change, give up their kingdoms, and join in. To be part of this kingdom is to acknowledge who is in charge- and

¹ Book of Concord – Large and Small Catechism

² Mulholland 51-52

it is not us. There are boundaries in God's kingdom, and they do not match the boundaries of the kingdoms of this world. To pray this prayer, and say, "Your Kingdom Come," is to renounce our citizenship in all other kingdoms, and to live in the Kingdom of God, wherever we are, and whatever we are doing. 1 John 2:15-16 states clearly, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world." Every time the church prays this prayer, we acknowledge our allegiance to only one King. This is why it is improper to place symbols and tokens of other worldly kingdoms in our sanctuaries and worship. They are not emblems of God's kingdom. When the church prays this prayer, we acknowledge that the kingdom has not attained its fullness, and that we await that fullness as we lean toward the future, working in the present. When we pray, "Thy Kingdom Come," we acknowledge that God – through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the only ruler of our lives, and not any earthly ruler. Even though we may be in worldly territory, we lift the cross of God's kingdom.³

We think God's kingdom will come after Jesus' return. That is NOT what Jesus taught. We hear in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the Good News." We have a responsibility to do the work of the Kingdom, because it is among us now. Jesus' words in John 18:36, "My Kingdom is not of this world." We have the responsibility to promote the Kingdom in which Jesus is of, God's Kingdom, where everything is upside-down: first is last and last is first; exalted are humbled and humble are exalted; sinners are forgiven and the righteous are chastised; the poor are blessed and the rich sent away empty; give up everything to gain everything. Jesus calls us to take serious our responsibility to turn this world upside-down.⁴ In the installation service, we sand the hymn, "The Canticle of the Turning" #723 ELW. The world is turning, and we to be the ones running on that wheel.

All of Jesus' teaching revolves around ushering in God's Kingdom: a world order, an order of things where God alone will rule. Our hope for the future rests in our ability to fill the present with this new kingdom. Our prayer that God should bring God's kingdom is at the same time a prayer that God will include us in that kingdom, and will help us in that kingdom now.⁵

One of our major stumbling blocks today is the common understanding of what "Kingdom Come" looks like. Culture has taught us that it is not something we want to come. Society teaches us that it will be destructive, it will be violent, the whole "Left Behind" theology of "Kingdom Come." That is NOT consistent with the biblical story, or the Gospel of Christ. We see in the writings of the New Testament, that these followers were truly wanting this Kingdom to Come. Paul has to deal with the followers who are upset that it hasn't happened already. Jesus teaches that this kingdom is something that we should desire, long for, and yes, even pray for,

³ Willimon/Hauerwas, Pages 50-60

⁴ Mulholland. Pages 53-58

⁵ Scott, pages 91-93

because it is here already. We don't have to wait. But worldly culture and the media have taught us to fear the Kingdom! It sells books and movies. That is not the Kingdom we pray for in this prayer. That is just another worldly kingdom, trying to draw us away, by causing us to fear.

Another stumbling block is the English word "Kingdom." We here in the US don't have an understanding about what it means to live in a kingdom and be subject to a ruler. That is not our experience, as it was in the experience of Jesus, and Jesus' audience at the time he gives this prayer. They fully understand what kingdom was all about. The English word "kingdom" translates the Hebrew word "malkuth" and the Aramaic word "malkutha." Both of these words emphasize process over person, and style of rule over area of control. We would be more accurate in our translation if we used the word "Reign", the "Reigning of God" rather than Kingdom of God. (Moravian) This stresses the type and mode of divine rule. The Greek word "basilieia", which describes, once again, how God rules and not so much where God rules. When we pray this prayer, and we ask for God's Kingdom to come, we are asking God to enter into our lives and take control. We are absolutely subject to God.⁶ Several years ago, I was teaching a World Religion class at a private university. The term "Muslim", a follower of Islam, is translated from the Arabic as "One who submits and surrenders," to Allah, which is the God of Abraham. The same God that Jesus tell us to pray to in this prayer. Many of my students stated they were glad they were Christian and not Muslim, because Christians are not required to submit or surrender to God. I told them they didn't understand the Lord's Prayer very well. It appears we could learn something from our Muslim cousins' understanding of God and who the true and only ruler of our lives should be. The one to whom we are required to submit and surrender.

Thy Will Be Done – In Luke, this next section (thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven) is left out. It appears Luke didn't believe this part was needed. It is clear that Luke believed it was implied. As we read Luke's Gospel, it is all about God's will being done. It is all about God's will being done here and now. Just compare the beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12 and in Luke 6:20-26. For Luke, God's Kingdom is here and now. And all the residents of God's kingdom have no alternative but to do God's will (not their will), and to live heavenly lives here and now.⁷

Notice that the initial focus is not on what we should/ought/would/could do. It is on what God is doing, before it ever implies anything to us. Your will be done God. The choice and chance is not ours. The worldly kingdom continues to tell us that we are in control, we get to decide, We are #1, it is all up to us, it is in our hands, it is all about us! That is not the case. I am NOT saying that God controls everything and that God causes everything to happen (even the bad stuff) to further God's Will. (Temptations/free will) But I am saying that God will use us regardless of the choices we make, places we go, things we do. Everything can have a purpose for God's plan. God uses us despite ourselves. Luther said "God can shoot with the warped bow and ride the lame horse." We are the warped bow that God will shoot, regardless of how much we think we don't work. God will ride us even when we think we can't go any further. We pray for God's Kingdom to come – a petition of hope. Now we pray for God's will to be done – a petition of

⁶ Crossan, page 77-78

⁷ Scott, pages 93-94

patience. God deals with our will by the suffering of Christ on the cross. We hear in Mark 8:31-38 that we are called to pick up our cross and follow Christ and do God's will. Just as Christ did God's will, even though it wasn't always best for Jesus. It also won't always be what we think is best for us. We may not like/want/enjoy the implications of picking up our cross, following Christ, and doing God's will for the work of God's Kingdom. Trust me, I know. (Living apart story) But we are called to be patient.⁸ (Islip)

This is a prayer of commitment for us. Praying this prayer says we will stop resisting the call of God's will. We will trust you, God, is what we are saying. We will stop trusting ourselves because that has failed us. We now know that we can only trust in God.⁹

We have this propensity in Christianity today to believe that we are able to lean on Jesus as our substitute to do God's will. We say Jesus was the perfect example, and paid the price for our unwillingness to do God's will in our own lives. That Jesus' death on the cross allows us to be disobedient, by not changing and confirming our lives to God's will, by not doing what God's calls us to do, by not working for God's kingdom. That is not what we hear from Jesus in scripture. Jesus was obedient to God even to the point of death on the cross. And in Mark 8:31-38, we hear Jesus say that if we want to be Jesus' followers, we must deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow him. If we want to save our life we must lose it. If we are going to pray this prayer, we must be willing to deny ourselves, and tell God that we will give up our whole lives if we have to, following Christ's example.¹⁰

On Earth As It Is In Heaven – When we pray “On earth as it is in heaven”, we are asking God to teach us how God wants things to be. The earthly kingdoms are not the way God desires. We are called to live heavenly lives, God's kingdom lives here. The ultimate intersection of heaven and earth is the cross. At the cross, God exposes all the powers of this world. At the cross, God calls into question all the evil forces that work against God's Kingdom. It is at the cross that God's will has been done. The Lutheran theological lens and perspective is called the Theology of the Cross. The cross is the window through which we see heaven, and work to make that view here on earth. In the Garden, Jesus asks if this cup can pass from him (Matthew 26:39), and the answer is “NO!” Jesus then prays, “Not my will, but your will be done.”¹¹ Jesus does on earth, as he would in heaven.

The vision of heaven given to us by John of Patmos in Revelation 21:1-8 is that Heaven will come here, to earth, and rest here, on earth. Forever where God's Kingdom will be established in its fullness. Heaven is not a place far away. Heaven is not a place we go after. We live now in eternal life, in the place called heaven. We see glimpses, from time to time, of the Kingdom we actually live in. We see the in-breaking of the Kingdom, only dimly what we will one day see clearly. As citizens of this kingdom, we are called to live according to it, here and now. As it is here and now.

⁸ Willimon/Hauerwas, pages 61-65

⁹ Mulholland, page 65

¹⁰ Crossan pages 97-118

¹¹ Willimon/Hauerwas, pages 66-69

What is God's will for us? To actively seek God's will for our lives requires a shift of focus from "what do I want from God", to "What does God want from me?" God wants a patient anticipation from us. We continue to do the work God has called us to do, until God speaks and call us to something else. And God speaks when God is ready to speak, which might have something to do with us being ready to hear. God as our heavenly parent, desires a child-like trust – simple trust. God commands us to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and might AND to love our neighbor as ourself (Matthew 22:37-40 – Great Commandment). This means total commitment to love –agape love. This trust and agape love leads us to walk with Christ. And waling with Christ entails all that Mark 8:31-38 implies (deny ourselves, pick up cross, follow Christ, do God's will, live in God's kingdom). We surrender and submit our lives to God. And this submission leads us to commit our lives to the kingdom.¹² We want to be in control, but God rules all of our lives. The reign of God calls for complete surrender and submission So, as citizens of this kingdom, hold your nail, and offer your allegiance when you pray the words: THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

¹² David Westphal, Thy Will Be Done, pages 37-50