

Colossians 1:9-13; Matthew 6:10

Thy Kingdom Come – Mt. 6:10

When I view the petitions of the Lord's prayer I am able to see those petitions fall into a number of categories. The first petition challenges and convicts us – The second and third petitions should greatly encourage us – and the 4th, 5th, and 6th petitions minister to our greatest needs.

We are challenged and convicted when we begin our petitions with *hallowed be thy name*. We are taught at once that our chief concern in life should be the honor of our God. This takes precedence over the things we desire and need and this petition sets the tone by which we petition God. It is true that we approach God openly – He is *Our Father which art in heaven*. But as this first petition indicates we also approach Him reverently and with godly fear. Our highest priority must be that God be sanctified in our hearts and in our homes and in our church. Our desire beyond that is for His name to be sanctified in our nation.

I say this petition challenges and convicts us because it runs contrary to the way the world thinks as well as the way many Christians think. I've shared with you on a number of occasions my testimony to the fact that I didn't grow up in a Christian home. My parents were not church goers. And yet looking back on the days of my childhood I am able to recognize that even in a non-Christian home the cultural effects of Christianity could still be traced. I never heard my parents use profanity. I never heard them take the name of the Lord in vain. Nor did you hear or see things on TV that were blatant insults to God.

I can still remember how repulsed my Dad was when the nation became enamored with rock music. Not in your wildest dreams would the notion be harbored in those days that this style of music would one day not only be heard in the church but it would come to dominate much of the church of Christ.

It becomes most discouraging to realize how far this nation has degenerated over the course of my lifetime. In contrast to the name of the Lord being hallowed it has become much more acceptable to approach God casually. Our culture is defined by being casual and informal and in keeping with that kind of culture our approach to God is governed the same way. This casual approach to God and to spiritual things is not only seen by the way people to a great degree approach church but it's also reflected in the endless stream of Bible translations which are designed with the philosophy that the Bible must condescend to our casual culture in order to be relevant.

Thees and *Thous* make the Bible too hard to understand we're told. And the extent to which some Bible translations strive to be culturally correct is now reflected in Zondervan's gender neutral NIV version in which God is not named with the use of masculine pronouns.

This spiritual degeneracy is, of course, accompanied with the moral degeneracy that goes hand in hand with it. Who, among God honoring Christians, doesn't feel the effects of the wickedness of our time? It seems that Christianity is either being completely polluted or squeezed out of existence. We can't keep up with every piece of legislation that makes virtue out of sin and that condemns what is virtuous. We look in vain to the political landscape to see any hope of our culture being delivered from its downward spiral.

And in response to the flood tide of iniquity it seems that more and more Christians feel compelled to take a monastic approach in which they simply try to build walls around their families in order to hedge their children in and keep the world out and thus protect their families from the wicked effects of the world much of which are even discernible in the church. Our culture sadly and tragically flies in the face of *hallowed be thy name*. This is why I say that this first petition challenges and convicts us.

By way of contrast, however, the second petition of the Lord's prayer should lift our spirits and greatly encourage us. *Thy Kingdom come* – we pray. Is there a solution to our moral degeneracy? There is – and it's found in the Lord answering this prayer – *Thy Kingdom come*. Is there hope for a nation that has spurned its heritage and sunk so deeply into the mire and muck of sin? There is hope – and that hope is found in this petition being answered – *Thy Kingdom come*. Is there hope that our families might escape being swallowed up by the flood tide of iniquity? Is there hope that the church of Christ can be brought back to the place where the name of God is hallowed rather than defiled? Is there hope that as individuals we can move forward against the current of iniquity that presses hard against us? There is hope in every one of these areas. The hope is found in this petition being prayed and answered – *Thy Kingdom come*.

What I would like to do this morning, then, is to admonish and exhort you as Christians living in a degenerate day to make much of this petition. Here is a petition that you need never fear using too much. Here is a petition that should be prayed daily and even several times in the course of the day. Here is a matter in which we should give God no rest until He hears and responds to our cry –

Thy Kingdom Come

In order, then, to encourage you to utilize this petition much – I would have you consider with me first of all:

I. The Backdrop to this Petition

I need not labor this point too much because I've already set the stage, so to speak, for this petition by giving you the backdrop of our degenerate culture. Let me point out, however, that there is a sense in which this world belongs to the devil. When the devil tempted Christ in the wilderness he attempted to use his reign over the world as a bargaining chip in order to seduce Christ into bowing down to him.

So we read in Lk. 4:5-7 *And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.*

The devil was offering Christ an easier path to gaining the world than the path to the cross. And the implication is that the devil had a just claim to the world. He had conquered the world by sin. He had gained the world by seducing Adam and Eve into sin. And since that time this world has been engulfed in a kingdom of darkness.

We read from Col. 1:13 that as Christians we have been delivered from the power of darkness and we've been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And in 2Cor. 4:4 *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* And in Eph 6:12 *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

This world, then, is under the dominion of darkness. It's under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air which is a reference to the devil. That's rather ironic to contemplate isn't it? This world which takes so much pride in being enlightened is in fact in the dark. This world which can boast of its technological achievements and can point to the many things it has built is for all those things nevertheless blind.

And this blindness refers to the blindness of their understanding. Eph 4:18 *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:* This is why sinners can challenge the notion of God's existence – their understanding is darkened and they suffer from blindness of heart. They come into this world as rebels against God with a bias against God.

When you are challenged by an atheist to prove the existence of God, your answer should be: I could prove His existence to you if you weren't biased against Him. But, then again, if you weren't biased against Him you would see how ridiculous the notion would be that there is no God. Everything around you declares His existence and everything within you – most notably the voice of your conscience testifies to His existence. It is only because of willful ignorance and the devil's influence of blinding the sinner's mind that he can question the existence of God.

The backdrop to this petition *Thy Kingdom come* is the existence of the kingdom of darkness. We would do well to remember, however, that against this backdrop of darkness Christ has established His Kingdom. Remember the theme of the Sermon on the Mount as well as the theme of Matthew's gospel – that theme is the Kingdom of heaven. In fact this is a predominant theme of the entire New Testament.

John the Baptist came preaching – *Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The very first message that Christ preached was identical to the message of John. So we read in Mt 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of*

heaven is at hand. We have noted throughout our studies in the Sermon on the Mount that the predominant theme is the theme of the Kingdom – *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven – Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And now comes this prayer *Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* This would also be the theme of the apostle in the book of Acts. Indeed when the book of Acts ends it ends with this testimony: Ac 28:30,31 *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

There is a definite sense, then, in which Christ's Kingdom has come. When we pray for His Kingdom to come, we are really praying for His Kingdom to advance. This is what we long to see – Christ's Kingdom advance. We need to see it advance in our own lives. We still fight with sin. Sin strives to reign over us – but through God's grace grounded in the merits of Christ's atoning death we're exhorted to not let sin reign over us but to yield ourselves, rather, to God. When we pray *Thy Kingdom come*, therefore, we're praying for our own advancement in our personal sanctification. We're praying that we'll be better equipped by our personal holiness to hallow the name of Christ.

And when we pray *Thy Kingdom come* we're praying for the advancement of Christ's cause in our churches. Oh that Christ's Kingdom would advance in Indianapolis through the preaching of the gospel and that it would advance in Greenville and Phoenix and Trinity Alabama and Winston-Salem and every other place that we're endeavoring to plant and grow churches.

When we pray *Thy Kingdom come* we're praying for the Kingdom of Christ to overpower and subdue the kingdom of the devil. We're praying for the light of the gospel to dispel the darkness of the devil's domain. We're praying for righteousness to replace sin in every domain. We're praying for eyes to be opened and for men to be turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18).

The backdrop to this petition, then, should encourage us to pray *Thy Kingdom come*. This petition answers to our needs and to our desires. It expresses our desire for the gospel to go forth in this land to dispel the darkness and bring in the reign of grace through the reign of Christ.

To encourage you further to make much of this petition, consider with me next:

II. Our Confidence in Using this Petition

Thy Kingdom come – we pray. Oddly enough, some would question the use of this petition by Christians. Some would see it as an appropriate petition for the Jews to pray in anticipation of a millennial reign of Christ but it's not an appropriate petition for Christians in this dispensation. Some forms of dispensationalism would have you believe that the Kingdom of Christ will not advance but that it will, rather, diminish. Things will grow continually worse until the weak and enfeebled church of Christ is at last raptured from the

scene of time. Only after a 7 year tribulation period will Christ's Kingdom come with the return of Christ to set up His thousand year reign. This view of events overlooks the truth that Christ has established a Kingdom now and that He rules and reigns now. Under this prophetic scheme we would do better to pray – *Lord, let thy present Kingdom diminish until the time that you return.*

May we not be so governed by a times and seasons mentality that we fail to utilize this petition that the Lord Jesus teaches us to use. I believe we find, in principle, this very petition being used by the Apostles in Acts 12. It was a precarious time for the church. James had been executed and Peter had been arrested and it appeared that the church was about to suffer a great setback. But we read in v. 5 that *prayer was made without ceasing by the church unto God for him.* And by the end of chp. 12 Peter is released, Herod is smitten and perhaps more importantly we read in v. 24 *But the word of God grew and multiplied.* Does not such a narrative illustrate to us the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in answer to the prayers of His people?

This is a petition that we can and should use because it's a petition given to us by Christ Himself. You have heard me often times say that we can pray with confidence, knowing that we're praying in the will of God when we utilize the prayers of the Bible. Praying in God's will is sometimes a hit or miss proposition with us. We hope, at times, that we're praying in God's will when we ask for specific things – but here's a way that we can be sure that we're praying in God's will – when we pray the way Christ specifically taught us to pray.

And if we're taught to pray *Thy Kingdom come* then we can mark this matter down with certainty that it is God's will for His Kingdom to come. It is God's will for the cause of Christ to make advances. It is God's will for the light of the gospel to dispel the darkness of sin. It is God's will for the devil's kingdom to be defeated. We need never harbor any doubts about the matter. Why else would Christ teach us to pray *Thy Kingdom come*?

Would He teach us to pray this way even though it is not His will for His Kingdom to advance? Would He teach us to pray this way in order to mock us and frustrate us? We know that that is not the way Christ operates. He teaches us to pray this way because it is His will for His Kingdom to advance.

Our confidence is further bolstered by the fact that Christ is our King – and that He's King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It would be vain for us to pray *Thy Kingdom come* if we were praying to One who didn't have the power and authority to hear and answer such a petition. But we know that all power and authority has been given to Christ. We know that He has taken His seat at the right hand of God with that power and authority. And so we acknowledge that we serve a great King - Ps 95:3 *For the LORD [is] a great God, and a great King above all gods.* We acknowledge further that we serve not only a great King but a glorious King – *Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory* (Ps. 24:10).

What encouragement we find, then, to utilize this petition *thy Kingdom come*. Notice from the petition that it is *His* Kingdom. The word *thy* means that it's His. We're not asking Christ to advance something that doesn't already belong to Him. It's His Kingdom. He is a great and glorious King and He's made the matter of His will certain when He instructed His disciples to pray *Thy Kingdom come*. What confidence we can take to God's throne, then, when we pray for His Kingdom to advance.

We see, then, the backdrop against which this petition is made. We see also the confidence we can and should have in utilizing this petition. It remains for us to consider, finally:

III. Our Privilege and Duty in Utilizing This Petition

The Lord has given us a part to play, so to speak, when it comes to the advancement of His Kingdom. We are, of course, to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. We are to live lives that are in keeping with the standards of the Kingdom. We saw in our last study how this second petition is strongly linked to the previous one. Note again the words of Eze 36:23 *And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I [am] the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.*

This verse shows us that for genuine evangelism to take place – not market evangelism but genuine evangelism – there must be a hallowing of God's name. The world needs to see that we're different – not that we're the same as the world. What this verse indicates to us, therefore, is that the Kingdom of heaven will advance through the personal sanctity of the people of God.

These are things, then, that we contribute to the advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven. But now add this all important thing that we must do – we must pray. *When ye pray* – that is the setting for the Lord's prayer. *After this manner therefore, pray ye.* And among the things that we pray for comes this petition for the Lord's Kingdom to advance.

You may not feel that there's much you can do to advance the cause of Christ. Indeed, when we contemplate the forces that we're up against there's a corporate sense of despair these days. What can we do in the face of such widespread opposition to Christ? What can we do when iniquity has come in like a flood and sin has become acceptable? It seems that we can do so little. I can't run for public office – I don't have the funds or the background or the connections. I don't have a very wide sphere of influence in my workplace or in my neighborhood and those that I do work with and live near think I'm kind of strange anyway. I don't seem to have much influence with men on any level.

What can I do? – to which the answer comes directly from Christ Himself – you can and you must pray. And in the course of your praying pray *Thy Kingdom come*. I know I've mentioned this before – how in the book of Revelation however difficult you find the symbols and the apocalyptic language – there is one thing that comes across very clearly and that is that the things that are taking place in that book are taking place in answer to

the prayers of God's people. We read in Re 8:3,4 *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer [it] with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, [which came] with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*

Reference is made to the prayers of all saints. The things that take place in this book, then, are in response to the unified praying of the people of God. I can't help but believe that the unified praying of all the saints would have to include this petition – *thy Kingdom come*.

You see, then, what a privilege and what an obligation we bear to utilize this petition. God's Kingdom will come and it will come in answer to the prayers of His people. We have the privilege of being used of God to advance His cause. I hope, then, that you'll be greatly encouraged to utilize this petition. The need is great – I don't think anyone would debate that point. We need to see the Lord move. Nothing else will suffice. The challenges we face are that far beyond us. Spiritual problems require spiritual solutions and the solution to our current dilemma is for the the Lord's Kingdom to come.

I hope, then, that you'll be encouraged to pray and to pray much. I hope that you'll gain the confidence to pray. We certainly can and should take heart this morning. Our Lord rules and reigns. All power and authority is committed to Him and He is the One who instructs us to pray *Thy Kingdom come*. May God stir our hearts, then, to pray and to pray often until we see the Lord move with power and might in our day to advance the cause of His kingdom.