

“Your Kingdom Come”

Tom Peryer

Isaiah 39:9-20

So we, as Thomas said, we're in this series on praying, and we're coming today to intercession. We're following the structure of the Lord's Prayer, and I have the phrase from the Lord's Prayer, Your kingdom come. When we think of the word kingdom, it's natural to think of the kingdoms of the world. And when we look at the kingdoms of the world through the TV screen or wherever you get your news from, it's hard, especially at the moment, not to feel a mixture of alarm, despair, helplessness on what is going on.

A quarter of this 21st century is gone, and when we think of the big headlines, they were all unexpected, and they were all pretty bad. Here are a few...

- 2001: 9/11, and the start of the war in Afghanistan.
- 2003: the Iraq War.
- 2004: the terrible tsunami.
- 2008: the worldwide financial crisis.
- 2010: the start of austerity.
- 2016: the Brexit vote.
- 2017: first Trump presidency.
- 2019: the start of the COVID epidemic.
- 2022: the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- 2024: the Hamas attack on Israel and the Israeli war on Gaza.
- 2025: the second Trump presidency.
- 2026: the American-Israeli war on Iran.

And a multitude of other things could be added. To pin your hopes on stability, security, peace and prosperity on the leaders of countries and their legislators seems a pretty foolish thing to do right now. So many of the taken for granted assumptions and pillars of the past 75 years have been knocked away.

At Christmas we sing the words of the carol, *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*. It has this verse...

*“Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring.”*

So, what of the words that Jesus told us to pray, to intercede for? How do they relate to the kingdoms and republics of this world?

In terms of our capacity as so-called ‘ordinary’ Christians to change the world and bring about the kingdom of God, we may feel like an ant trying to roll a large stone uphill. But there is one thing that we can do that is unique to us and that is pray.

Most of the things we do especially in terms of trying to make the world a better place can be done by other religions and other organisations. But intercessory prayer is unique to us. And that is one reason why we are focusing for a time on prayer and in particular the Lord’s prayer which we are exploring over a number of Sundays, line by line.

Although the Lord’s prayer has been a key element of Christian worship both public and private ever since Jesus spoke the words, I think the prayer is as much about a structure or scaffolding for praying as it is a prayer to be said again and again using the same words.

So let's explore that part of the scaffolding which bears the words 'Your kingdom come'.

To help us I have the easiest three point-sermon imaginable for this three word title. Your kingdom come.

1st point **YOUR**
2nd point **KINGDOM**
3rd point **COME**

But I'm going to change it slightly...

1st point **YOUR**
2nd point **KINGLY REIGN**
3rd point **COME**

I will be using the phrase 'kingly reign' as much as kingdom because the Greek word (*basileia*)¹ used in the gospels and epistles for 'kingdom' can just as easily be translated kingly or royal reign or sovereignty.

Now let's move to the first word and point.

1) YOUR

'Your' not 'My' or 'Our' but 'Your'. It's true isn't it, that much of our praying is self-centred. I wouldn't get too guilty about that. It's understandable. It's natural but it needs correction. The focus on the camera needs to shift. The prayer steering wheel in prayer needs to be turned in another direction.

¹ βασιλεία - <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g932/niv/tr/0-1/>

You will have noticed before I think, that the first part of the prayer is entirely God-centred.

- Our **Father**, in heaven,
- hallowed be **your** name,
- **your** kingdom come
- **your** will be done.

God comes first. In prayer we need to begin by orienting ourselves to God, directing our words and our thoughts to his words, his priorities his call on our lives. It was John the Baptist who said on encountering Jesus at the start of his ministry 'He (i.e. Jesus), must increase and I must decrease.' That should be true of our praying.

Second word: second point

2) KINGDOM OR KINGLY REIGN

We cannot fully pray 'your kingdom come' unless we have some understanding of what that kingdom, that kingly reign is like and is supposed to look like. Much has been written and preached and debated on what Jesus in particular meant by the kingdom of God (or, as Matthew mainly puts it, the Kingdom of Heaven - which is the same thing).

One theologian writes:

'The Kingdom of God is the central theme of the teaching of Jesus' 'Jesus made it clear that he was concerned with nothing less than the renewal of the world on the lines of God's original purpose.'

- Richardson

This kingdom is not to be confused with any ordinary earthly kingdom or empire. It was not the British Empire nor is it modern day America nor modern-day Israel and of course not modern day Iran. Christ is the king of this kingdom and he told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. And the kingdom of God or Christ's kingly reign is frequently diametrically opposed to the kingdoms and republics of this world and their leaders. Jesus frequently referred to the kingdom of God. That phrase or 'kingdom of heaven' which Matthew prefers to use come more than 80 times in the 4 gospels.

The kingdom is seen in the Beatitudes of Jesus. Blessed are those who know they are poor in spirit. The kingdom values are seen when Jesus announced his mission in the synagogue:

Luke 4:18

(Isaiah 61:1)

**'¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.'**

It is there in the miracles of Jesus when he touched those no others would touch, when he raised Lazarus from the dead, when he brought more joy to the wedding feast by turning water into wine, when he spoke kindly to a Samaritan woman or a woman suffering a painful incurable disease. It is there when he fed the hungry stomachs of 5000 people with bread and fish and when he fed their hungry souls with the words of life or quenched their thirsty souls with those same words.

The kingdom of God is there in his stories, in his saving, healing acts in his calling of 12 unlikely men, in his humble riding into Jerusalem as king, in the washing of his followers' feet and in becoming obedient to death even death on the cross.

The kingdom of God consists of those who are poor in spirit, who are humble, who long to live a better life, a life which is towards righteous-living. It is good news for those who are generous, forgiving, compassionate loving towards those around them, especially those who don't seem to deserve those things. It is good news for those who are willing to see themselves as a child; who are willing to take a back seat; who are willing to wash the feet of others. It is good news for those deciding to change the course of their life by following Jesus. Because all those things are hallmarks of the kingdom of God.

The kingly reign of Christ cannot be seen in those who are arrogant, who throw their weight around, who are disdainful and contemptuous of others. Who seek their own way, who live to accumulate riches and power and influence. It is bad news for those who believe might is right, that it is my way or the highway, that people can be tossed aside when they have outlived their usefulness. It is bad news for those who cheat on their partners, or the businesses they work for or the country they seek to lead. It is bad news for those who think they are self-made, self-sufficient, self-seeking, self-justifying, self-centred. These are not the hallmarks and values of the kingdom.

When we pray 'your kingdom come', we are praying that kingdom values and priorities may prevail; we are praying that men and women would say 'yes' to the Lordship and kingly rule of Jesus in their lives; we are praying that countless deeds of grace and generosity would be carried out that day to counteract the countless acts of those who belong to another kingdom and have another allegiance. We are seeking and praying blessing, restoration, healing, reconciliation, freedom for those we know and for those we don't know. For the church we are part of and for the many churches we are not. For our community, our city, our country, our leaders, our world.

I want to say one thing very briefly about the current war on Iran. I do not know if the attacks and the war is justified – if it passes the test of a just war. I do not think so but I am not privy to all the information that the President of the United States has. It is possible, maybe, that Iran posed an immediate and there was or direct threat to the US and there is of course no doubt that Iran has created death and destruction on its own people and beyond its borders. So I do not know whether these attacks are truly justified. What I do believe is that the arrogance, the bluster, the boasting, the belittling of friends, the dismissal of any contrary opinion, the triumphalism, the lack of any expression of regret for children killed in a school, the swagger and vainglory – all of which we have seen and heard on the part of the leaders of this war, none of these things are part of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and any who act like that and claim they are inside that kingdom are gravely mistaken, as are all those who support them.

Ecclesiastes 10

**¹² Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious,
but fools are consumed by their own lips.**

**¹³ At the beginning their words are folly;
at the end they are wicked madness –'**

Now we come to the last point.

3) COME – YOUR KINGDOM COME

So having recognised that in our private and corporate prayer life, we need to start with God and not ourselves and having taken on board what the kingdom of God values, priorities and goals are, then we go to God in prayer and ask him to make those things happen. To bring about his kingly reign in every place in the earth.

But you say *'I thought Jesus said "the kingdom of God has come and I among you now."*' Or someone else says *'But surely the kingdom of God won't come until the end of the age'?*

Well you both have a point. And the truth is that the kingdom has come, the kingly reign has begun, but his rule has not yet prevailed in every corner of the world and to every person, so it is still coming and being established. Until one day it will come in totality. When Jesus began his ministry, he proclaimed that the kingdom of God had come and was present amongst them because he himself had come. Over three years in word and deed Jesus demonstrated that the kingdom had come or rather had been inaugurated. It had begun.

But just before his time on earth ended, he gave the charge to his disciples and all those who came after him to go into all the world to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.

We are his servants, his deputies charged with carrying out his mandate, not civil servants but royal servants called to extend the boundaries of the kingdom across the whole earth and into the structures and heart of all societies and earthly kingdoms. You know America was always there even though it was unknown to most of the world. It lay waiting to be discovered. Electricity always existed. It lay there just waiting to be discovered and harnessed.

Then at some point in the future the kingdom will come in all its fulness, power and glory, when every eye shall see him, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess his kingly rule, his Lordship over everything. Then a new heaven and a new earth will be brought into being.

The king has come and so has the kingdom. The kingdom is gradually coming and being revealed. One day the kingdom will come in all its fulness and finality.

Until then that day, our prayer 'your kingdom come' relates to the here and now. We are to pray that bit by bit, piece by piece, person by person and day by day, God's kingly reign on earth will become more and more manifest. That happens when Christian men and women live faithful fruitful lives. So, we pray for that. It happens when the word of God and the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ is spoken and proclaimed in power, sincerity and love. So, we pray for the faithful proclamation of the good news and for those who proclaim it- Evangelists, teachers, children and youth leaders, bible translators, Alpha course leaders.

A little bit of the kingdom comes when someone somewhere in Christ's name is clothed physically and spiritually, is fed physically and spiritually, is visited in prison, is given water to grow their crops or spiritual water to refresh their soul. When we pray for those doing that work, we are praying, 'your kingdom come'. When we pray for the leaders of nations that they will act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before their God, we are praying Your kingdom come. And of course, we are commanded to pray for them as we heard in our New Testament reading. When we pray against injustice, against ill treatment of people and creation, against unjust and indefensible wars, we are praying 'your kingdom come' we are praying God's priorities and values.

In our kingdom praying, we pray for good things to happen and bad things to end. Yesterday I was on my knees thinking about this talk. That's because I was doing some weeding as well as thinking about the talk. But even though I am not a gardener I know that to have a beautiful garden, you have to pull out weeds and but you also have to plant seeds, bulbs and shrubs to take their place and stem their growth. So it is in our praying and our living. In our kingdom prayers, we are praying that all that is of the devil and against the kingdom of God will be uprooted and at the same time we are praying that seeds will be planted in men and womens' hearts, that fruit bearing plants and trees will be planted and thrive.

Sometimes we are at a loss for to know what to pray and maybe then all we can pray is 'your kingdom come your will be done'" over and over again or maybe even:

'Lord I don't know what is best for that person or for that situation but I pray that your kingly reign, your presence, your love for them will be known. I pray that your best for their lives may come to pass., Lord let your kingdom come in their lives.'

I want to add two more points to this talk which relate to the whole phrase "Your kingdom come" The first point is, in a way, the opposite of where I started from when I said that the starting point of our prayers must be God's focus not our focus. But when we are praying your kingdom come, then we also have to say and start it in me, continue to work that out in me.

It is no good asking for the kingly reign of God to come in other people's lives, for God to change the hard- hearted, the boastful and the oppressor, if we are also not engaged in the constant ongoing day by day work of letting the fulness of the kingdom values and fruits be manifest in our lives. Secondly and very lastly as we pray for this and that, for this person and that, we also have to be open to the possibility or more likely probability that God will want us to contribute not just in prayer but in some other way to bringing about the coming of the kingdom.

One of the prayers by Sir Thomas More ends:

'The things we pray for, good Lord, give us grace to labour for'.

We may feel that so many of things that are on our minds and which we ought to pray for are way above our capacity to do anything practical to mend that situation or person. That may be true, especially with things more and more distant from us and above our pay grade as it were. But if we turn our attention to it and say to God "Lord is there anything I can do in this situation that I am asking you for?" I suspect we would be surprised at the number of times we can do something to be God's instrument for making his kingdom come. Sometimes we hold the pair of scissors that will cut the ropes that bind. A word or card of encouragement, an offer to do something practical, a gift of money or hospitality, an offer to be that volunteer for that charity. Is climate change on your mind? Then go a bit greener? Is war on your mind then don't get so angry or impatient with those around you or you see on the TV screen and support an agency trying to bring welfare in that conflict zone.

So, after the praying ask "Is it I Lord? Am I a bit of the answer in this situation?" Maybe not in which case your contribution, my contribution is to go persevering in prayer. Your kingdom come. Your kingly reign come.

So, to sum up:

Our prayers of intercession start with God's priorities and ways.

Our prayers of intercessions are that God's kingly reign should be become a reality in individual lives and communities and nations.

Yes the kingdom has come but we need to go on praying, proclaiming and working for the kingdom to become more and more visible until that day when it will come in all its fulness in the form of a new heaven and a new earth.

Even so Come, Lord Jesus



@allsaintswestonchurch



All Saints Weston Church



01225 447663

All Saints Church, Church Street, Weston, Bath, BA1 4BT
office@allsaintswestn.org.uk allsaintsweston.org.uk