

Pray Like This (Week 3) -Your Kingdon and Will **Sermon Summary**

Yesterday, we put our attention squarely on the 2nd and 3rd petitions of The Lord's Prayer, which overlap and form the heart or core of the whole prayer. And this when we begin to realize that praying like Jesus isn't only about asking God for things, but God asking things of us.



1) Your Kingdom Come:

What does this phrase?

- a) You can make the case that "God's Kingdom" or "the kingdom of heaven" is the central feature of Jesus' own ministry and teaching (Jesus uses the expression over 100 times).
- b) "Kingdom" in Jesus' day was word about governance, rule, or, you might even say, political power. Rome was a "kingdom," as was its subsidiary rulers like Herod, and the Jews of that era yearned for a Messiah who would come and free them those "kingdoms" and set up an independent Israel as its own "kingdom."
- c) But from the opening chapters of scripture we see that God's Kingdom is all of creation, and thus every nation, territory, and ruling figure in it. God has rightful claim to it all, and all other kingdoms are subordinate to and part of His. As biblical scholar N. T. Wright puts it, God's Kingdom is about bringing heaven to earth, and making earth like an experience of heaven.
- d) But His Kingdom is categorically different from how earthly kingdoms operate. Its characters and ethics are wholly distinct. (See the James Mulholland quote below.)
- e) A great summary verse for c. and d. above is Jesus' famous response to Pilate that His/God's Kingdom "doesn't belong to this world" (John 18.36).
- f) See section C. below for ideas about how this phrase can, and should, shape how you pray.

2) Your Will Be Done:

- a) To a practicing Jew, or Jesus' era or any other, God's "will" has been clearly made known in the Old Testament, and namely the Mosaic law.
- b) Christians add to that by saying what we hear in, see in, and learn from Jesus is also the clearest expression of God's "will" for humanity.
- c) Thus, when in our day we turn conversations about God's "will" into something ambiguous, anxious, or unknown, or even into something very specific questions like "What career path should I follow?" or "When should I retire?", we can miss that God has already made the most important facets of His will known to us, and He asks us to prioritize those.
- d) This phrase also admits that God's will isn't always done (we wouldn't have to pray about it if that weren't the case). All of us in our own lives have felt the crucial difference between knowing God's will and doing it. Jesus Himself felt that tension in the garden of Gethsemane (see Mark 14.36).
- e) See section C. below for ideas about how this phrase can, or should, shape our own prayer life.

Two Quotes Worth Revisiting

James Mullholland, in his book, "The Lord's Prayer - Praying Like Jesus in a Culture of Prosperity":

The Kingdom of God points to an inverted, or upside-down, way of life that contrasts with the prevailing social order. The first will be last and the last will be first, the exalted will be humbled and the humbled will be exalted, sinners are forgiven and welcomed while the self-righteous are chastised, the poor are blessed and the rich are confronted, the lost are found and the dead are made alive, the lion lays down with the lamb and spears are beaten into farming tools.

The Kingdom of God is usually the very opposite of what we would expect. It is a kingdom founded on grace, not works, grounded in love, not legalism, and open to all, not just a few. Most importantly, it is a kingdom most concerned with those who have been ignored, neglected, and even oppressed by the kingdoms of this world.

Indeed, the consistency with which the kingdom of God is the opposite of the kingdoms of this world should serve as a warning. Conventional wisdom...is not a good barometer of God's kingdom...Jesus' description of God's kingdom challenges all human measures of success.

Adam Hamilton (United Methodist pastor), in his book on the Lord's Prayer about these God's kingdom and will: Every time we pray like this, we ask God for our planet to become what God intended for it to be. This is not just a personal or private vision. This is a vision for the world...The Lord's Prayer calls us to examine the world around us and ask, "Where does the world as it is not align with the world as it should be? What would our world look like if God's will was done on earth?" Every public policy decision, every social issue, every place where humans suffer, is somehow meant to be affected by these phrases in the Lord's Prayer. As we read our news feeds and watch the news, so many of the stories we see should drive us to our knees to pray "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done." And then, in praying this prayer, we are driven back to our feet and out into the streets as agents of God to answer this prayer. You are beginning to see that the Lord's Prayer is more than a prayer. It is a vision to strive toward, a call to action we seek to live, and a roadmap for a life of character and faith.

Praying This Week

- To pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done is a prayer of commitment. So work into your prayer life a daily prayer that is your own way of expressing that sentiment. You can think of it as your own "pledge of allegiance" to God's kingdom and will over and above anyone or anything else.

- These two phrases express a tension: on the one hand, our world and all its particulars demonstrate in terrible clarity that God's Kingdom has not come in full, but on the other hand, because God the King is faithful, it will. Try to include both deeply-felt lament and earnest hope in your prayer this week. An even more specific practice would be to split time evenly between the two.

- Practice the sequence implied in that phrase "God's will be done" (as N. T. Wright suggests in his book on The Lord's Prayer): first, yield your own will to God (submit or subordinate yourself to Him), and then, second, from that humble posture ask God to change you and propel you out into your world to act as He directs.

- Two very short prayers you can weave into your daily prayer, or use them multiple times a day to pull you back to God who is your Center: "God, not me and mine, but You and Yours" and "God, Your will - nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."