

The Lord's Prayer: Kingdom
Matthew 6:9-13
Sunday, September 13, 2026

This is the second week in our series on the Lord's Prayer. Last week I asked you a question and I hope you've been thinking about it since then. "Who's your hero?" Honestly, who do you most look up to? Who do you most want to imitate as you live your life?

And, of course, we all know the "right" answer. It's God, as revealed in Jesus. When we pray "Our Father" as Jesus taught us, we are saying that God is our perfectly loving Father who wants nothing more than to love, protect, and provide for us. And we are His completely devoted children, who want to think God's thoughts, say God's words, and do God's deeds, as revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is our hero. He's the one we want to be like when we grow up.

Now, last week, we also talked a little about how actually following Jesus can be hard; how we're fallen and we need God's help—God's Spirit—to change us, transform us more and more into the image of Christ, so we CAN think the kinds of things Jesus thought, and do the kinds of things Jesus did.

So, what happens as that change happens? What happens as we start living like our hero Jesus? Well, that's what the next part of the prayer is about. "May your name be revered as holy, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Now that first part—"may your name be revered as holy"—follows naturally from the fact that God is our loving Father. When we begin to truly experience our perfectly loving Father as just that—perfectly loving; and when we begin to become more like that love, we will

naturally grow increasingly to see him as worthy of our reverence. Or, as Dallas Willard puts it in his paraphrase, “may your name be treasured and loved.”

Now, the Message translation of the prayer, which we recited together a few minutes ago, puts it a little differently. In that version, we are praying for God to “reveal who You are.” It’s a little more active. We aren’t expressing some abstract aspiration that God might be known. We saying to God (politely of course), “reveal yourself.”

So, how does that happen? How is God revealed? Well, there are several different ways. For one thing, God reveals Himself in the created order. The universe and everything in it is an expression of God’s power, God’s glory, and especially God’s love.

But God didn’t stop there. Once humans came along, God chose a particular group of humans, the Israelites, to reveal who He was through this book ... the Bible; the story of God’s creative power and God’s love for creation and for humanity.

But God went even further, he revealed himself most fully in his son Jesus, the incarnation of the second person of the Holy Trinity. As Jesus told his disciple Philip after the last Supper in chapter 14 of John’s Gospel, when you look at Jesus—what he said, what he did—you’re looking at God.

And while all those means of revealing Himself are awe-inspiring, they beg the question: If God has already revealed himself, why would Jesus ask us to pray that God would reveal Himself? And the answer is simple. When we pray, “God reveal yourself,” we are asking God to reveal Himself through us. We aren’t just expressing a vague wish that God will do something, somewhere, sometime, to reveal himself. He’s already done that. We’re expressing the very

concrete wish that God will use *us* to reveal his love, mercy, and forgiveness to the world. We're asking that we can help us be His ambassadors to the world.

And, as we talked about last week, the way we do that is by making God's physical incarnation, Jesus, our hero. By seeking to follow and imitate him; to think the things he thought, say the things he said, and do the things he did.

But, as we also talked about last week, because we are fallen, the only way we can *really* follow Jesus is to surrender ourselves to him, to receive the Holy Spirit, and allow that Holy Spirit to change us, to transform us into the image of Christ. And then ... just think about it ... each one of us a little Christ, changing the world around us the way Jesus changed it.

And this is what Jesus is talking about when he goes on and tells us to pray, "May your kingdom come. May your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven."

Now, one of the questions this verse raises is, "What's does Jesus mean by 'kingdom'" And I think we find the answer in a Jewish literary device called the "synonymous couplet." If you read through the Hebrew Scriptures—what we call the Old Testament—you'll see, especially in the Psalms, the author expressing a certain idea twice, in slightly different ways. So, for instance, Psalm 19:1, the author writes, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*" Same idea, repeated twice to drive the point home.

Well, that's what's going on here. The kingdom Jesus is talking about is, quite simply, the realm where God's will is done. Now, of course, we know—and Jesus here makes clear—that there is already a place where God's will is perfectly done: in the spiritual realm—or eternity, or heaven; the realm where *everyone* already recognizes who God is.

But in telling us to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, Jesus makes clear that here on earth, there's still some work to do. All you've got to do is turn on the TV or your news feed to see that God's will is *not* the dominant way things work here on earth. In fact, quite the opposite. Here's the prayer our culture gives us to pray: "*My kingdom come, my will be done.*"

Which, of course, raises the important question of what *is* God's will. And the answer is simple. The apostle John tells us in his first letter: God is love. Jesus tells us in the Gospels, the secret to eternal life is to love God and to love one another. God's will is that we will all live in love with God and one another.

Which brings us back to the question of how does that happen? How does a world in which everyone is living in love with God and one another come into existence? What are we actually praying for when we pray for God's will to be done?

And the answer is us. When we pray this prayer, we aren't just expressing the wish that God will someday, somehow do something to enable his will to be universally done. Of course, that's what we expect to happen at the end of time when, God comes to dwell with God's people, and there is no more crying, no more tears.

But in the meantime, it's up to us. It's up to us to reveal who God is through the way we live our lives. It's up to us to *live* God's will. It's up to us to live God's love in everything we think, say, and do.

When we pray this prayer, we are praying that God will reveal Himself to *us* through his Spirit; that through the Spirit God will change us. And that through that transformation, we will

be able, ourselves, to live in God's will. And, that by living our lives more and more the way Jesus would live them if he were us, we enable the world around us to see an alternative to the way they have been living—to see God's kingdom in action—and want to get some of that for themselves.

And so, my prayer for all of us today is this: May each one of us live in God's love, so we can live out God's love and, by doing so, may we reveal God, do God's will, and expand his kingdom here on earth, just as it is in heaven.