

As newborn children, our parents prayed the Lord's Prayer for and over us. From the moment we could finally speak, our parents taught us to say the Lord's Prayer ourselves. Rightly so, for the Lord's Prayer is the first item of the faith that is given to us when we are baptized. Joined to Christ in those waters is where we are made children of the Father, able to say, "Our Father." The Lord teaches us to pray "*Thy kingdom come.*" The coming of the Father's kingdom is the second greatest thing for which we pray. Only the hallowing of His name, the pure teaching of His Word and holy living according to it comes before praying for God's kingdom to come.

The catechism teaches us that God's kingdom comes "*by itself without our prayer.*" Very few knew of the Lord's birth. Anyone who was anyone, Caesar Augustus, Herod the Great, the priests, missed it. It took the angels to get the word spread. God tells us through Malachi that Elijah the prophet, that is, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, would come to prepare the way of the Lord. Through John's preaching hearts were changed, prepared for the Lord's coming. The kingdom of God, the Lord Jesus, came in the fullness of time, in God's time. According to His plan. God doesn't need us to bring about His kingdom. He takes care of that Himself.

God's kingdom comes on its own, by itself. There is no stopping God and His work in this world. But we pray that His kingdom may come to us. That we would be given the gift of faith, that the Holy Spirit would lead us to "*believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.*" The kingdom of God comes now by faith. The gift of our redemption, our deliverance from sin, death, and the power of the devil, is given now, here, today. It is not done in any bright, shining spectacle. It is done in humble means. The wondrous gift of redemption in Jesus Christ is given in water, word, bread, and wine. There God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven. This is what sustains us in our lives.

This is what keeps us from despair. For we see the words of our Lord fulfilled in abundance: "**signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding because of what is coming on the world.**" We hear the Lord speak elsewhere of nations and kingdoms rising against one another, wars and rumors of wars. We look around and we see all creation, government, society itself seeming to be coming undone and it must. The things of this life and world will not last. They will pass away even as the heavenly bodies themselves will melt as they burn.

Does that depress or frighten you? Does it make you worry about your possessions, your sports team, your favorite vacation spot? Does it cause you to wonder if you can get insurance for the apocalypse? Repent. The fear for the things of this world reveals your love for them. Jesus warns you: "**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.**" Moths eat, rust destroys, thieves break in and steal. The things of this earth and this life do not, cannot, will not, last. Only Jesus and His Word. "**Heaven and earth will pass away,**" Jesus says, "**but My words will not pass away.**"

We have the promise of redemption, the forgiveness of sins because of Christ's perfect life and innocent death in our place. We have everything we need in Jesus. But we long for the things of this world because we do still have our sinful nature, that part of us that does not believe, that entices and leads us into doubt and sin. This is why we also pray "*Thy will be done,*" asking that God would break and hinder "*every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come,*" that He would strengthen and keep "*us firm in His Word and faith.*" That we would be humble and meek in repentance and receive Him by faith as He comes now. Still the dear Christ enters in. He comes even now.

And the Lord is coming again. That is also what we pray for when we say, "Thy kingdom come." We utter that ancient Christian prayer that appears already in the Bible itself: "Come, Lord Jesus." That prayer pops up again and again in our Advent hymns:

"Savior of the Nations, Come"

"Come, then, O Lord Jesus"

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

"Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes"

“Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come”

‘O Savior, Rend the Heavens wide, come down, come down with mighty stride”

These are prayers not for His birth in Bethlehem, but for His coming now in grace, and for His coming again in glory. We wait. And we feebly struggle against devil, world, and flesh, which are all passing away. Our disappointments and sorrows threaten to overcome us. We long for the final redemption not just of our souls but of our bodies when we will no longer sin, will no longer have guilt, bad memories and the shame that comes from them.

Already our hopes and fears are met by Jesus as He comes in the Holy Communion. We look towards the rising sun as we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” Come, Lord Jesus!” And He does. We bring our sins, anxieties, our weak love for Him and struggle against love for things of this world, and He comes not in might, power, and judgment, but kindly, gently, and for our good. To forgive, strengthen, and sustain us. To lift up our eyes to Him. That is why we all together, pastor and people, face Him together as we hear His words by which He comes to us in His body and blood. Even as we wait for His final coming together, we listen and we receive together.

The Sun of Righteousness comes with healing in His wings, that on the day of His coming in glory, when that bright, blazing, eternal Sun will rise in the east, we will meet Him not with dread or foreboding. Our hearts are set not on the things of this world, but on Him. That day will be not as today, with the trees outside stripped bare of all leaves and brown, but rather, we will see it as the fig tree, as any tree, putting out its leaves for the warmth and splendor of summer. Don’t cower, straighten up. Don’t hang your heads in shame, raise them! Because your redemption is drawing near!

Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!