

God's Kingdom
Lord's Prayer – Week 2
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Luke 11:2-4; Psalm 145:10-13
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It is a common plot for television and movies for a man to take a woman to a restaurant on a date. It is a French restaurant, and the menu is printed in French. The woman, fluent in the French language, orders something that only she and the waiter understand. The man, not wanting to appear ignorant, does something truly ignorant. He simply points to some mysterious words in the menu and says, "I'll have one of those." Big mistake. Much to the dismay of the man, when the meal is brought to the table, what the man has ordered is both alien and disgustingly similar to what he has tried to keep out of his garden.

Be careful what you order in restaurants. If you don't know what you are asking for, you might very well regret it.

The same can be said for prayer. Be careful what you pray for. You might get it, and regret it. Take the Lord's Prayer, for example. Here is a prayer that looks and sounds safe. What could possibly be distressing about praying for our daily bread, or freedom from temptation?

But hold on a moment. Very early in the prayer, there is the phrase, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Praying for the kingdom to come on earth might be like asking for escargot in a French restaurant and ending up with a plate of snails. You'll get what you ask for, but it might not be what you want. Do you really want the kingdom of God to come on earth?

Let's back up and recall what we talked about last week:

Lord's Prayer has 8 parts:

Invocation

3 "Thy Petitions"

Hallowed be thy name

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

3 "Us Petitions"

Forgive us our debts

Lead us not into temptation

Deliver us from evil

Doxology

Last week we talked about the Invocation, and the first “Thy Petition”. Today we will address the other two “Thy Petitions”. Next week we will talk about the “Us Petitions”. Finally on our last Sunday, we will end where the prayer ends, with the Doxology.

Pastor Bob Leroe writes that, “the word "kingdom" in the original language means "rule" or "reign". God’s Kingdom is unique in that it is not a human kingdom. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall, but the reign of God will prevail and last forever.

Pastor Timothy Peck writes that “We don’t use the word "kingdom" very much these days, and when we do, we’re usually talking about a place, like the kingdom of Nepal, the United Kingdom of England or the Magic Kingdom. In each these cases, a kingdom is a specific geographical place defined by its borders. But the Greek word for "kingdom" in the Bible puts the emphasis on the rule or reign of the king rather on the place that king exercises that reign. In fact, some Bible translations translate the Greek phrase "kingdom of God" as the "reign of God" or the "rule of God" to bring out this idea.”

Our Psalmist for today describes God’s Kingdom by talking about the “glorious splendor of your kingdom” and that “your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.”

If you recall, Pilate asked Jesus what kind of king He was; Jesus didn’t fit Pilate’s perception; He didn’t conform to the popular notion of a political ruler. Jesus responded, saying, "My Kingdom is not of this world." He told His followers, "The Kingdom of God is within you." Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries announcing that the Kingdom of God had come-it is here.

Peck continues by saying, “You might picture God’s kingdom this way. In Jesus’ first coming, he established God’s kingdom. He opened the doors to God’s kingdom, inviting people to come through those doors by trusting in his death and resurrection. So God’s kingdom reign is established in part through Jesus first coming. Yet it’s only when Jesus comes again at the end of the age when God’s Kingdom reign will truly show its power and be established on earth as it is in heaven.

So we live in a time of tension between the establishment of God’s kingdom and the completion of God’s kingdom. Some Bible scholars call this a tension between the "already" aspects of God’s reign and the "not yet" aspects" of God’s reign. Through Jesus, our sins are already forgiven, yet because of the "not yet" we still struggle with the power of sin in our lives, still falling and failing. Through Jesus, our salvation is already guaranteed and we’re promised complete healing and restoration when Christ comes again, but because of the "not yet" our bodies still get sick and we still struggle with doubts and fears. Already the powers of evil and darkness have been defeated by Jesus through his death and resurrection, yet because of the "not yet" there’s still evil and darkness in our world. So when we pray, "your kingdom come" we’re not

asking for the "already" part, but we're looking forward to the "not yet" part."

What exactly are we asking for when we pray this phrase of the Lord's Prayer? We are actually asking for two things. We are asking for a radical change in our society and a radical change within ourselves.

Are you ready for God's Kingdom to come?

Maynard Pittendreigh reminds us that "in the kingdom of God, it is the poor who are blessed. It is those who mourn and grieve. It is the meek and those who hunger and thirst for what is right. It is the merciful and the pure in heart. It is the peacemaker and the persecuted. These are the people blessed in God's Kingdom.

That is a radical change from our present society in which the rich are the ones who are blessed; in which the aggressive climber of the corporate ladder gets the best job; and in which the immoral prosper.

In the kingdom of God, when you get hit on your right cheek, you will willingly get hit on your left cheek as well.

In the kingdom of God, if someone asks for your coat, you give him your shirt as well. If anyone has two shirts, one of them is shared with someone who has none. Two shirts! My goodness, I must have 30 shirts- and don't get me started on my shoes!

But be careful about what you pray for. These global changes are wonderful. Who could argue with peace, security, and freedom? But when we pray that the Kingdom of God comes to earth, we are not only asking for something global, but something personal as well.

The kingdom of God means letting go of our hate and anger. Instead, we learn to love one another. It means letting go of our fear and anxiety. Instead, we learn to trust in God. The kingdom of God means letting go of our greed for possessions, our lust for power, and our selfish world view. These are hard things to let go of, because they have been part of us for so long.

So often, we cling to that which is of no value, and lose the things that are of importance. We work long hours at our jobs and we miss seeing our children grow up. We stuff money into our wallets and buy the things for our homes that a burglar later steals from us. And all the while we missed the opportunities to give out of our abundance to those who had nothing.

The kingdom of God is within us, or can be. But we have to let go of those worthless things that have become dear to us. Let go of the greed. Let go of the anger. Let go of the fear. We are asked to value the things that God values. Love, peace, trust, joy...

It is a difficult thing to do, to pray for God's kingdom to come on this earth. Are you ready to pray?

Remember, it is the poor who are blessed in the kingdom. Are you ready to pray?

Remember it is the one who mourns and grieves who is blessed. Are you ready to pray?

Remember it is the meek who inherits the kingdom of God, not the strong and powerful. Are you ready to pray?

Remember, it is the enemy, as well as those who are easy to like, whom you must love. Are you ready to pray?

I'm not certain I'm always ready. My life, as yours, has been seduced by the way things are in this present age. I like new things, a feeling of control and power, and yes my shoes. Yet God does not depend on our readiness. The Kingdom will come by God's initiative and when God decides.

Ready or not, we must pray, knowing that the answer to our prayer may change all the comfortable rules by which we have lived.

Are you ready? Then the next time you pray the Lord's Prayer(which will be in a few minutes), you may tremble as you come to the most dangerous words you may ever utter: "Thy kingdom come..."

And be prepared for a revolutionary change when God answers that prayer.

Are you ready to pray?

After all, do we really know what exactly are we asking for when we pray this prayer? Praying this prayer might be like asking for escargot in a French restaurant and ending up with a plate of snails. You'll get what you ask for, but it might not be what you want. Praying this prayer may mean things change, we will have to change, and that life will be different.

When we pray "Thy Kingdom come" we are asking God to advance and expand that Kingdom in the hearts of people, and we are anticipating the day when that Kingdom literally comes when Jesus returns. It is a Kingdom that is both present and future-it is here and now, and will one day come in fullness. Are you ready to pray? Amen.