

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 25/10/2020

Mini Series – “Making Disciples -Learning to pray”

Part Four - “God's priority in prayer”

Matthew 6:1-15 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.² “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.⁵ “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

All new products come with a manual – even our new building will have a manual! We often think we can manage without it, but we can't. We need to trust the manufacturer's manual, and use it to get the best results. The same is true for our lives. Our creator, the God who created all things by the power of his word, has provided a manual for us. That manual is the Bible. It is primarily a revelation of the character and nature of God, and, if we want to truly see God revealed in all his glory, we need to read it. The Bible also shows us who we are and how we are to relate to God. We do this by glorifying him as we delight in him and obey him.

Everything that exists has been created by a glorious God to put his glory on display. The only right response is to praise God as we see this glory and delight in it.

Jesus commanded us (**Pray then like this**) to begin our prayers with the desire to see God's name honoured and to pray for our hearts to be changed so that we become a people who honour God as we delight in him and delight to lead obedient lives.

Yet many of those he created fail to honour him as God, ignoring him and the manual he has given us. Why? The Bible tells us that there are two kingdoms in the universe, God's kingdom and the kingdom of Satan. Satan's rebellion against God means that, through Adam and Eve, the entire human race is born into Satan's kingdom and opposed to God.

Unless we voluntarily come under the rule of God, we will never truly glorify God in our lives.

What does this mean for our prayer life? Jesus teaches us that we need to pray **Your kingdom come** if we are to see God's name glorified in our lives and in the world. Looking at four aspects of God's kingdom will help us to understand what it means for his rule and reign as Sovereign God to come, remembering that the eternal God has revealed himself to us as three persons, Father, Son and Spirit, all fully and equally God, yet all one God.

1. God's universal rule – God is reigning now and always has done

God's rule began before Jesus was born as a man on earth. David's prayer to God in **1 Chronicles 29:10ff** starts by exalting God: Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. **Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.** David acknowledges God's universal rule. Every nation and kingdom, and all that is in them, is under God's sovereign rule and always has been. People may refuse to submit to God's rule, but that doesn't mean he isn't ruling.

God rules now and always has.

2. God's visible rule – seen in the coming of Jesus Christ to earth.

As God in human flesh, Jesus exercised the rule of God, and **showed** the power of the kingdom. He did this in many ways, but it was particularly obvious in the way he exercised authority over demons – those fallen angels who rebelled against God’s rule and belong to the kingdom of Satan. Satan’s kingdom is one of darkness and destruction, but it has been defeated by Jesus Christ when he died on the cross and rose again, ascending into heaven. Jesus brought demons under submission to him, and cast them out of demon-possessed people. Challenged by religious leaders, he tells them in **Matthew 12:28** ‘But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.’ When Jesus walked on earth, he exercised his authority as king, demonstrating God’s kingdom and God’s rule over the world. When we pray **Your kingdom come**, we are asking God to do the same in our own day.

We are asking God to visibly show his power over Satan’s kingdom, primarily through the preaching of the Gospel.

Every time we pray that God will raise up preachers and empower them by his Spirit to faithfully proclaim Christ crucified, risen and ascended, we are effectively praying for the kingdom of God to come. That isn’t enough on its own, because, despite empowered Gospel preaching, people still deny Christ’s right to rule.

What is needed is for the kingdom of God to come into the hearts of individuals

3. God’s internal rule – the changing of our rebellious hearts

We all have a heart that is set against God, wanting to insist on its own way and refusing to submit to God. God has told us how to live in a way that will be for our eternal good, yet we refuse to submit to his commands even though we can see that they are good and right. To take one example, we know that being patient and forgiving in church, family and community life leads to peace and harmony. The Bible commands this right approach in **Colossians 3:13**, yet we still get irritable with each other and hold grudges. Logic tells us that being obedient to the command would give us peace and harmony, but logic cannot change our rebellious heart.

- We need Christ to come and rule over our hearts and he does this when we are born again by his Spirit. He takes up residence in our hearts not only as Saviour but as Lord and King.
- When we pray **Your kingdom come** for ourselves, we are asking God to extend his royal power over the whole of our lives, including our emotions, finances, relationships and time, until we fully and gladly submit to him in everything.

When we struggle with a particular sin, we need to pray this petition over that sin, asking Christ to rule where that battle is taking place. God will bring his word to bear on our hearts and empower us by his Spirit so that we become submissive to his rule through:

- The word of God shaping our thoughts and leading us to a passage of scripture that speaks directly into that situation
- The Spirit of God at work in us, correcting our desires

This is also a request for those who aren't yet born again - it is a prayer for Gospel success amongst those who are still in rebellion to God.

The failure to pray **Your kingdom come** meaningfully, both as individuals and as the church has led to:

- Lack of salvation in our society
- Lack of personal godliness in the lives of Christians

Our praying is so often at the level of asking for the physical and visible things in life. We have failed to do the work of praying for our hearts to be changed and for Christ to reign supreme over every part of our lives. Why?

- We may not have known what we should be praying for, though we do now!
- We might be scared of what it will mean for God to expose the rebellion in our hearts, and deal with our sin.

Yet we will never find true joy while we are rebelling against God and we will never find true delight in God while we are grieving his Spirit by our sin.

The pathway to true joy leads to a cross – the cross of Christ where my will is crucified and Christ reigns supreme over my life.

4. God's future rule – when Jesus returns to this earth

Jesus will put Satan, and all in his kingdom, into a place where they will never again trouble those in God's kingdom.

He will establish his rule of righteousness over his people so that they will have undivided hearts and be done with sinning forever. Jesus will be seen to be the king that he actually is and his kingdom will last forever as **Revelation 11:15** tells us:

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

To pray 'Your kingdom come' is to pray for the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory to reign forever

When we look at this world and see the mess it is in because of sin (broken relationships, addictions, abuse of God's gift of sex, destruction of unborn infants, greed, poverty and much more) how can we not pray this prayer?

- Surely we want to see sin defeated in our own lives and the lives of our families and friends?
- Surely we want to see God honoured by people delighting in him, and living in obedience to him?

We need to 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness' (Matthew 6:33) and one way we do that is to pray: Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your Kingdom come. (Matthew 6:9-10)

Let's pray that prayer:

Father in heaven, we thank you for your gracious rule over all that you have made. We see how you govern the day and night, setting the sun on its course through the day, and calling the stars by name to come out at night. We see your governance over the nations and leaders and over every event in the natural world. We confess our rebellion against you. We have not wanted you to rule our lives as is your right. We have wanted to rule our lives according to our own standards and the world's values. We see the mess this has caused because we have not followed your good and gracious ways. Please forgive us our sin of rebellion. We thank you for Jesus

Christ who visibly showed the power of your kingdom on earth and who continues to rule over the hearts and lives of people now, leading them out of Satan's kingdom into your kingdom of love, subduing our hearts by your word and your Spirit. We pray that you would grant freedom and power to preach the Gospel. We pray that Satan's kingdom will be destroyed, and those enslaved to him will be set free. Lord Jesus, as the strong man, we pray that you will bind the evil one and deliver the captives. We pray this for our families, friends, neighbours and those we work and study with. We pray for ourselves that you will set us free from those sins that hold us captive. We submit every area of our life to you and pray for you to reign supreme in our hearts. We look forward to your Son's return to this earth in power and glory. We ask that you hasten that day when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.