

Series: Hallowed be your name

Week Commencing 17th October 2022

Notes for next week's sermon on "Your kingdom come"

We are working our way through the Lord's Prayer, line by line. Next Sunday we will explore what it means to pray "*Your Kingdom come*". Our readings this week will help us reflect on the nature of the Kingdom of God and what it means to pray this line of the Lord's Prayer.

DAY 1: Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

The Kingdom of God is not geographical like the United Kingdom. And it's not automatic like being part of the animal Kingdom. To be in God's kingdom means to place yourself under the rule of Christ the King. Ever since Jesus came 2000 years ago he has been inviting people to come into his kingdom. Entering the kingdom means abandoning the concept that you are King, turning from your rebellion against the real King and trusting and serving the King. When you do that you receive a King's pardon on the basis of Jesus' death and resurrection.

To pray 'your kingdom come' involves both a present and future aspect. We'll look at the future aspect in our next reading, but for God's kingdom to 'come' in the present, means more and more people coming under the rule of the King. The Kingdom of God has been growing in our diocese over 152 years as people have become Christians!

To each and every one of us, God has given a ministry of reconciliation. Compelled by the love of God and the knowledge that Jesus has died for people, we seek to persuade others to give up their rebellion and find reconciliation with God through the One who became sin for them. Today is the day for more and more people to join the Kingdom. That is why our strategic plan is *SHARING JESUS for LIFE*. As we heard in the sermon series which followed the launch of the strategic plan, there is a tremendous amnesty on offer at present - God will not count people's sins against them if they seek reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. Will you please pray 'your Kingdom come' so that by God's grace, more and more people would leave their self-made kingdoms and come into relationship with the King of Kings?

DAY 2: Read Revelation 21:1-8

Today we look at the future aspect of praying 'your Kingdom come'. In a world with perhaps unsurpassed international conflicts and tensions; with Russia escalating their war on Ukraine; where changing weather patterns are seeing many devastating extreme weather events and where even on the local and personal level we face many sadnesses, we pray *your Kingdom come* asking God to wind up this world and bring in his promised new heaven and new earth where death and sickness and sadness will be no more. This is what we read about in our reading today. In the new heavens and new earth all evil will be completely wiped out and because evil will be wiped out, everything associated with it - sickness, sadness, pain and death - will also be wiped out. Bring it on!! If you think life now is good - it's nothing compared to what living with God and Jesus for eternity will be like - the Bible describes it in terms of a party - feasting, singing - the place where there will no more pain or tears or crying or death anymore! Why not ask God to put this mess to an end? If you are under his rule - in the kingdom - then from the day he returns, you will enjoy life in perfect relationship with him for all eternity.

Of course there is a sobering aspect to praying 'your kingdom come'. For if it means the end of all evil, then all those people who have not taken up the opportunity of God' amnesty - of the new life made possible through Jesus Christ - the outcome for them is devastating! That's why both aspects of 'your kingdom come' are important - so that more and more people turn to Jesus before the final coming of the kingdom!

DAY 3: Read Mark 1:14-20

So far this week we have seen that there is both a present and a future aspect to God's kingdom. One helpful way of getting our head around this is to understand that the Kingdom of God is both 'now' but 'not yet'. That is, with the coming of Jesus to earth, the Kingdom (as we read in today's passage) has most definitely 'come'. The reason Jesus says the kingdom of God is 'near' is because he (the King) was near! So the kingdom of God has been inaugurated. It's begun. But it won't find complete fulfilment until Jesus returns and all evil and the Evil One is finally banished.

Note the three actions Jesus calls for *because* the Kingdom of God is near.

First, because the Kingdom has drawn near (because the King has drawn near), people are called on to repent. When you come face to face with the King, you realise you're NOT the king! You have a change of mind about who is really in charge – about who is really calling the shots. So you do a U-turn from running your life your way. You now seek to submit to the King and run your life His way!

Second, Jesus called on those listening to him to believe the good news. "Believe" here has the sense of 'trust'. He calls on people to trust that the Kingdom has drawn near; to trust that he is the King; to trust the good news that there is a God who cares and loves his creation so much that he has turned up to stake his claim over them and call them back into relationship with himself.

Third, he calls people to follow him. For those first disciples you'll remember, that meant physically walking away from the family business (fishing) and from their families, to literally follow him around Galilee and eventually up to Jerusalem. For us, it means working out what it means to put Jesus first.

So when you pray '*your kingdom come*', it will involve realising all that it means for you to live under the rule of the King now. It makes no logical sense to pray *your Kingdom come* when your own life is not under his rule! It makes no sense to ask for God's Kingdom to grow in the world if yourself have not repented - have not entrusted yourself to the King and are following your own way and not the King's!

Each time you pray *your kingdom come* means asking yourself, 'is my life completely under his rule?'

DAY 4: Read Matthew 13:24-45 (or 52 if you can manage!)

In our final reading this week we see Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom. Some of it is confronting but we see a little of what it means that the kingdom is both 'now' and 'not yet'.

In terms of 'now'? The kingdom of God is growing. From small beginnings in the 1st century, to 1/3 of the world's present day population. That's pretty impressive. (vv31-32)

In terms of 'now'? The good of the kingdom is like yeast which is worked into a piece of dough. So the impact of the good lives of believers as they follow Jesus, do good in his world and speak about the kingdom will end up influencing and impacting more and more people. (v33)

In terms of 'now'? The kingdom is so significant, so precious and of such great value that is worth more than anything else in the world. All one's possessions are nothing compared to the infinite value of being part of the Kingdom. (vv44-46)

In terms of 'not yet'? The harvest is most definitely 'not yet'. It is not until Jesus returns that those who are reconciled to him and those who are not will be separated and sorted out. Those who have taken up the amnesty have repented, believed and followed will find themselves in the kingdom in its final and glorious form for all eternity. And tragically those who have not turned to Jesus will find themselves shut out of the Kingdom. (vv24-30 and 36-43)

In terms of 'not yet'? vv47-50 tell a similar story to that section referred to above. At the end time spectacular coming of the King and the Kingdom, those who are righteous (because they've repented and turned themselves over to Jesus) will find themselves in the kingdom, while the unrighteous will find themselves in a terrible reality pictured here as fiery furnace.

So when you pray '*your kingdom come*', you are asking that the kingdom might continue to grow and flourish – like that great tree from a tiny mustard seed. You are asking that the good of the kingdom may impress itself throughout the world. You are asking that more and more people may see the very precious nature of the kingdom and so take hold of it with everything they have.

And when you pray '*your kingdom come*' you are also asking that the Lord Jesus as King in God's kingdom will return and finally sort out and put down evil once and for all and take those who are his children into his eternal kingdom.

Your kingdom come!