

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Theme: Your Kingdom Come.

The Lord's Prayer is amazing – it shows us we only come to God through an intimate relationship with Him as Father and we pray with and for others in His family. We've seen this prayer can be divided up into 2 parts, of 3 petitions - 1st 3 concerned with God – the glory and honour of His Holy Name (His Being and character); His kingdom and His will. The 2nd 3 petitions concern ourselves and are prayed as they dovetail into and further the first 3 petitions. We are able to rightly pray for our provision, pardon and protection.

We've seen something of what is involved to pray "*Hallowed be Your name*" – God's character and Being be held in reverent awe and fear on earth as it is in heaven, desiring God is worshipped and served aright – we pray for God to do this, also we are willing for Him to use us and hallow His name in our own lives as a church and individuals. Yet we do not stop there, for we move from this petition - realising, acknowledging that God's Name is not hallowed in our society, in our day and age. It means we have to ask "*Why ever not?*"

If God is so great, mighty, holy, pure, awesome and terrifying, why is He not more highly thought of and honoured? Why is it that all people do not fear or worship Him, do not desire Him or adore Him? The reason is that they belong to another kingdom which does not recognise Him. This kingdom rules in the lives of men and women, young people and children – it is the kingdom of darkness. This is the reason we need to pray this 2nd petition "*your Kingdom come*". There is a kingdom of darkness and it needs to be deposed and God's kingdom be established. Let's consider this petition using 3 main areas:

1. The Kingdom of Darkness.

Where does this kingdom exist? Who are its members? It exists in all of us; for all of us are born members of this dark kingdom. We are naturally members of it from the moment we are born, even conceived. We are born polluted and tainted by the darkness, we all belong to the dark side for we all have sin within us. Because of this sin, the real devil has rule and sway in our lives. Thankfully we are not as bad as we could be, but we are far from perfect. Our sinful nature rules us, dominates us, it binds our wills and hearts – often subtly. It deceives us into thinking we are fine. Yet we are all slaves to our sinful nature and can only do what our slave master tells us to do.

The Bible paints a dramatic picture of us as in the darkness of sin, blinded in sin. We are in darkness and the darkness is in us. Sin blinds us to God, to His person, purity, reality and love. We are described as dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1-3). The kingdom of darkness is a terrible kingdom to be in, a terrible state to be in (Ephesians 4:18), we only do the work of darkness (Romans 13:12). All of our hearts are naturally black holes which gravitationally draws other dark and black things into it. One of the OT plagues was darkness over the land of Egypt for 3 days and was a darkness that could be felt (Exodus 10:21). We may meet people and feel they are dark and evil, yet God knows each one of us are like this irrespective of how respectable, nice or decent we seem and we are in the kingdom of darkness.

Worse than this, over this kingdom is a horrible tyrant - the devil, the Prince, the ruler of the power of the air. He does not care for his subjects' welfare, he desires to snare, trap, imprison them deeper into his grasp and to prevent anyone escaping from him. He is glad to encourage them in their self-destruction and promises them anything and everything as he delightfully ruins their lives,

the lives of those around them and even their own bodies as they indulge in sin upon sin. Sadly, as they become more entrenched and imprisoned, he continues to deceive them into thinking they are freer.

Satan, the devil, hates God, hates His Son the Lord Jesus, hates their kingdom and its growth. The devil causes men, women and children to hate God (*inwardly if not openly*), to hate the Lord Jesus and His Church i.e. His people. Because of this God's Name becomes a joke, another swearword, another source of amusement; God's people are laughed at, opposed, mocked and even physically maltreated and may even be killed.

This is something of this kingdom and its ruler. Realise it is a real kingdom which we all belong to it by birth. No amount of water, at any stage of our lives, can wash away our sin and its pollution or its power. No religious ritual or religious words can free us from Satan's rule and grip. We are completely and utterly hopeless, trapped, ensnared by a grip on our very soul and we are powerless to escape. We need someone to rescue us, to provide the escape route, but who can do it? That's a question we'll see answered later!

2. The Kingdom of God.

What exactly is the kingdom of God? There is much confusion about what it means. The Bible does not show it primarily as a physical earthly kingdom, rule or authority. Some teach God's kingdom shows in its members' success, prosperity and wealth. It is not a political kingdom as some say and argue for a political viewpoint to allow for wholesale murder and massacre as they have a Liberation Theology. It is not to be thought of in terms of an earthly kingdom. The disciples were confused about this initially and asked Jesus in Acts 1:6 "*Lord, are you at this time*

going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Thinking of God's kingdom in any of those ways insults Him by bringing His kingdom so low as to think of it in earthly terms of splendour, prosperity, influence, magnificence or in terms of rule of power or might.

Briefly the Bible's clear teaching on God's kingdom is that it is His rule in the hearts and lives of people, young or old. He is the King and His kingdom is wherever His rule and reign is known, where His laws and decrees are loved, honoured and kept. It is where He reigns as Sovereign and is loved as Saviour. When we look at it in this way we see it can be viewed in 3 ways:

Firstly: in a sense God's kingdom has already come. It came when the Lord Jesus was on earth as He said in Luke 11:20 "*if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.*" Jesus in effect says here "*Consider the power, the authority, the rule, the majesty I have. Surely God's kingdom is here now!*" Which it was!

Secondly: it is here now. God's rule is known in part through the hearts and lives of those who have trusted Jesus as their Saviour, these ones love Him, submit to His will, to His rule and what He wants of for them. The Lord Jesus has to rule as Lord and King in the lives of all who call Him Saviour.

Thirdly: it has yet to fully come. There is a day coming when Satan, sin, all nations will be ruled by the Lord Jesus, be forever subdued and under His reign. As we sang earlier (MP: 379) "*Jesus shall reign where 're the sun does His successive journeys run; His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall rise and set no more.*"

In this petition it is the 2nd two that are included. His kingdom here now in the hearts of people who have trusted Him and His kingdom which is to fully come. These can be called "*the kingdom*

of grace” and “*the kingdom of glory*”. Both are part of the same kingdom, but viewed from 2 different time aspects e.g. an apple tree may have lots of blossom in the spring and then the fruit in autumn - at those 2 times it looks different, but it is still an apple tree.

Realise if we want to be in the kingdom of glory, we must enter it by the kingdom of grace now. Is not by what we earn, deserve or what we do, for all of us are in the kingdom of darkness and its grip. None of us can escape from it. We enter the kingdom of God through a divine and almighty work of God. Becoming a Christian isn't a little thing! We are taken out of the kingdom of darkness and transplanted, transferred into the kingdom of light (*Colossians 1:13-14*). This is accomplished when we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour - for God the Holy Spirit works this mighty miracle in us. We contribute nothing - except our guilt, deserved condemnation and sinful nature.

The Holy Spirit has the authority and power to do this because of what Jesus accomplished for people like us, who are God's enemies and hate Him, by His birth, life, death, resurrection and Ascension. He is the only One who makes this mighty transformation possible. Here the question is answered as to Who will come and rescue us and provide an escape route for us from the kingdom of darkness. Jesus' name means Saviour, Rescuer and He came on this rescue mission to rescue, save people like us. You need to ask yourself, as young or as old as you are “*Do I know Him as my own Rescuer and Saviour?*” If you do not, then you need to be aware that you are in desperate need of Jesus to be your Saviour, to give you not only eternal life, but a quality of life you can't even begin to imagine at the moment.

3. Implications of Praying for God's Kingdom to Come.

The **first implication** in praying “*your kingdom come*” means that we want **it to start with us as an individual**. We are to ask for God’s kingdom to come to us personally, for Him to do the work of grace, to change our life and to make us light and not leave us as darkness. It is a prayer for ourselves to be part of His kingdom of grace by doing His great saving work in our life.

When we know this, we thank Him and the **2nd implication** is that we pray for others around us - our relatives, friends, neighbours, colleagues etc. We pray for our town, country, Europe and the world too. This petition is an out-looking prayer, a missionary, an evangelistic prayer; it prays for evangelism, for the spread of the gospel both near and far. Here we have a warrant to pray for God’s rule to be known in the lives of young and old the whole world over. When we pray it we are involved in God’s purpose to save the world.

The **3rd implication** is that we are to pray against Satan, his rule and kingdom - that they will all be destroyed and overthrown; that his reign and rule over the lives and souls of people be broken, his prisoners be set free from their bondage and darkness; these poor captive lives, souls who are blind and maimed, will become children of God with fullness of LIFE and LIGHT and it be seen in this world. Satan’s rule is known where sin is. We are to necessarily pray for sin’s power and grip to be broken - in our own lives and the lives of others. We cannot pray this prayer and play fast and loose with sin as we are to be careful sin does not rule over us. We are no longer sold as slaves to sin as Christians, but as slaves to righteousness (*Romans 6*). It is astounding and marvellous the liberty we have given us from the Lord Jesus to pray such an immense thing. It is not just the conversion of a few, but scope to pray for a great revival, for God’s kingdom rule to be known on earth as it is in heaven. One glorious day all will

acknowledge God as King and bow the knee, but we pray this to be known before they face their Maker as Judge.

The **4th implication** is that we pray for His kingdom to be built up, established, to flourish in our lives, in the life of this church and in the lives of all His people (THE Church) here on earth. It means we are to be concerned to grow in Christ, in prayer, in our knowledge, love and experience of Him in our daily lives. I wonder if we desire that God's rule and reign should come to our hearts and lives, to the hearts and lives of people we know, of people we don't know. Is it our desire that His kingdom grow in us, through us and also in others? To pray "*Thy kingdom come*" is to pray for the success of the gospel, that its power is known by all who hear it - by our witness, the witness of the church here and as the gospel goes out around the world.

Yet the **5th implication** is it is a limited petition, it has a limited time span. One day all believers will cease to pray this, for His kingdom of glory would have come. As we pray this petition, we should be longing for Jesus' glorious 2nd coming to this earth. Do we say "*Even so come quickly*"? Does the thought of the return of Jesus Christ frighten us, cause us to be afraid? Does it give a sense of foreboding, that our life and fun will be spoiled? Does His glorious return, which is spoken of in excited, longing, wondrous ways by the writers of the NT, does it matter more to us than our daily bread? I've known and read of believers who were disappointed that Jesus didn't come that day! Do we expect Jesus could come today? If He did, would we be ready to meet Him as our Saviour or would it be as our Judge?

We are to be concerned for God's kingdom to come as the final glorious revelation of who He is, but it should move us to, stir us up to action - to tell the gospel to whoever; to seek to tell as many

as we can of His grace, love, glory and that He is coming as Judge. As we pray for them, we have to live our lives to please Him and in doing so, do we realise we are part of speeding up His return! 2 Peter 3:11-12 says “*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.*” We cannot just simply pray this, for it involves much more than words, but holy living, self-denial, doing what our Lord wants us to do; telling others of Him and so we have to be concerned for evangelisation - both locally and worldwide.

Its **final implication** is that we can pray with optimism about the future. Our God’s Kingdom will certainly come and triumph over all. We are on the victory side. The Lord Jesus will come in great power and glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Then sin, Satan and death will be destroyed, all His enemies will be removed; there will be a new heaven and earth established in righteousness, where there will be no more suffering, death, pain or tears and His kingdom WILL be on earth as in heaven. As the coming of our Saviour is declared in the last-but-one verse of the book of Revelation, the response that is given is: “*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*” That is what we ask when we pray “*Thy kingdom come*”!