

Your Kingdom Come

Rich Nathan

October 26 & 27, 2019

Just Pray

Matthew 6:10

There's a very famous children's story written by C.S. Lewis that many of you may have read to your kids. It's called *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. It was made into a wonderful movie that if you haven't seen it, I would very much encourage you to watch. In the movie, children walk through an old wardrobe that is a kind of gateway or doorway into another world, the world of Narnia.

When they get there, they discover that Narnia is under the spell of a terrible witch called The White Witch. A little girl named Lucy asks a faun named Mr. Tumnus about the White Witch. She asks, "Who is she?"

Mr. Tumnus replies:

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"Why, it is she that has got all Narnia under her thumb. It's she that makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!"

As the book progresses, we meet a wonderful, kind, powerful lion named Aslan who is a picture of Jesus Christ. As Aslan goes on the move in Narnia, the spell of the White Witch begins to break. We read that everywhere winter turns to spring. Here's a little of C.S. Lewis' description of spring breaking out everywhere as Aslan draws near.

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A dozen crocuses [grew] round the foot of an old tree – gold and purple and white. Then came a sound even more delicious than the sound of the water. Close behind the path they were following a bird suddenly chirped from the branch of a tree. It was answered by the chuckle of another bird a little further off. And then, as if that had been a signal, there was chattering and chirruping in every direction, and then a moment of full song, and within five minutes the whole wood was ringing with birds music, and wherever Edmund's eyes turned he saw birds alighting on branches, or sailing overhead or chasing one another or having little quarrels or tidying their feathers with their beaks....

The trees began to come fully alive. The larches and birches were covered with green --- the beech trees had put forth their delicate, transparent leaves. As the travelers walked under them the light also became green. A bee buzzed across their path.

"This is no thaw," said the dwarf [speaking to the White Witch]. "This is spring... your winter has been destroyed I tell you! This is Aslan's doing."

Do any of you feel like you've been living through a long winter? Everything seems dead or dying in your family, in your health, in your relationships or finances or your ministry. It's been a long, hard freeze and nothing seems to be working. We desperately want spring to come. We want to see signs of life. We want the snow to melt and grass to spring up, flowers to bloom, the birds to spring. But for that to happen, Aslan, this great Christ figure, has to get on the move. Aslan's kingdom needs to come.

We started a series last week from the Lord's Prayer titled "Just Pray". Today, I want to look at one of the key phrases in the Lord's prayer where we are instructed by Jesus to pray - "Your kingdom come, your will be done." Let's pray and we'll turn to God's Word.

Slide Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:

Our father in heaven
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom, the power
and the glory forever. Amen.

Scripture teaches us that God is the ruler of everything. Almighty God, the Creator, rules and reigns over everything in heaven and on earth – visible and invisible, big and small, high and low. God rules! God reigns over the mightiest angel like Michael, the archangel, and over the most wicked of demons, like Satan. Almighty God reigns over all things from the biggest galaxy to the smallest subatomic particle – over life and death, rich and poor, old and young. But while Almighty God reigns, we don't always experience his reign. We don't always see his rule.

When a person prays "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We're saying, "God, I know you reign. I know you rule. I know you are the king. But will you break into this situation. May I see your reign over here? Or over there?" To pray "your kingdom come" is to pray a huge prayer.

What I want to do is explore from the Bible a little more fully what we're praying when we pray, "your kingdom come". If we look back to the second book of the Bible called Exodus, we see an incredible picture of the kingdom of God. We see a collision of the

kingdom of God, the rule of God, the reign of God colliding with the kingdom of darkness.

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The exodus: the collision of the kingdoms

Exodus is a story of the rule of God coming into collision with the power of Egypt, and specifically the power of God that energized Egypt. You see, the story of the exodus is not just a story of a slave people of Israel being kept in cruel bondage by slave masters in Egypt. It is that. But the physical reality of this oppression is simply a manifestation of a deeper spiritual reality. There were dark forces that energized Egypt's enslavement of Israel. And there are always dark forces that energize oppression, domination, abuse, enslavement. There's often something more going on than meets the eye. There's something behind the scenes giving power and energy to the enslavement of people, to the tearing down of the image of God in people.

Anytime you see somebody abusing someone else, you should say to yourself, "I'm not just watching flesh and blood here. And there's something darker going on behind the political and military and economic power of Egypt – the spiritual powers of darkness. You see this displayed in Exodus 7:8-12.

Slide Exodus 7:8-12

⁸ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹ "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake."

¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake.

¹¹ Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: ¹² Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

The story of the snakes is a story of a spiritual battle. The snakes of the magicians represented their occult powers. Aaron's snake ate up their snake. The meaning couldn't be clearer. God is more powerful than any dark force. The story of the exodus is a story of the kingdom of God colliding with the kingdom of darkness which energized Egypt.

This is what the ten plagues were all about. You've heard of the ten plagues that God sent through Moses. What were the plagues all about?

The Lord tells Moses the meaning behind the plagues.

Slide Exodus 12:12

¹² “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.

Each of the plagues was a physical manifestation of the kingdom of God. God’s reign had come to destroy the powers of darkness ruling Egypt.

In the first plague, Moses turned the Nile River into blood. The Nile was supposed to be the home of the Egyptian god, Ha’pi. During the first plague, Ha’pi died or at least got his nose bloodied. The kingdom of God punched him in the face. Ha’pi turned to blood.

The second plague was frogs. And that was the symbol of another Egyptian goddess, Heqit, the goddess of fertility. When God’s kingdom came, Heqit spun out of control. Instead of giving fertility to crops and herds, she goes haywire and multiplies out of control.

During the fifth plague, the livestock begin to die. Bulls were represented by the Egyptian god, Apis and cows represented the Egyptian goddess, Isis. The killing of the cattle pointed to a deeper spiritual reality – the God of Israel was destroying the Egyptian gods and goddesses.

The highest god of the Egyptian pantheon was the god, Ra, the sun god. In the ninth plague, the sun god was blotted out as darkness came over the land. The Lord hears the prayers of his people who are being oppressed. He sees their suffering. He comes down and rescues his people Israel. God rules over the universe, but his people don’t always experience his rule.

So when we pray “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” we’re saying, “Lord, intervene. Break into this oppressive and unjust situation. Destroy the dark forces that are energizing this abuse.”

What happens when the kingdom comes? Almighty God liberates his people. He sets his people free. They are no longer dominated. They are no longer abused. They are no longer working for nothing. Throughout history when people have been enslaved, they look back at the story of the exodus and they’ve cried out, “Lord, your kingdom come!” African slaves in America always talked about the exodus. Let your kingdom come.

The same thing was true in South Africa under apartheid. Victims of the apartheid looked to the exodus. Let your kingdom come! Set us free. Lift this yoke of oppression off of our necks. The spell of winter breaks and spring comes!

Let me ask you a question. Are you or someone you know experiencing abuse, domination, control? Of course, we want to do what we humanly can do to report the

abuse – whether it’s to the police or Child Protective Services. Tell us at the church what you or someone you know is going through. But sometimes there’s not a lot humanly that we can do. Maybe the abuse is something the police or a government agency can’t deal with. Maybe it’s emotional abuse or repeated verbal abuse – constant putdowns or shaming or threats. Maybe it’s economic control. A spouse controls every penny of spending. Maybe the abuse is happening throughout the company you’re working for or in a church we used to attend. Maybe the abuse is far off – we’re concerned about our Christian brothers and sisters being daily persecuted by Chairman Kim in North Korea or in China or in Iran or maybe the abuse is more subtle – religious discrimination against anyone who dissents from the enforced secular orthodoxy of an academic department at a university.

What should we do? Just pray. Lord, bring your power against the forces that are energizing this oppression. Lord, intervene! We need to experience your rule! Just pray!

Let me give you a different picture of the kingdom of God. Not so much in collision with the forces of darkness. I’d like to move ahead in the story of Israel to the time of King Solomon. Under King Solomon – the third king of Israel – Israel experienced unprecedented power. The borders of Israel stretched from Egypt all the way to Iraq. Much of the Middle East was subject to Israel during Solomon’s reign. The wealth of the nations poured into Israel. What we see in Solomon’s reign is a picture of the prosperity of the kingdom.

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Solomon’s reign: The prosperity of the kingdom

Now, I want you to see this with me in 1 Kings. When we pray “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”, we’re not just praying about spiritual things, invisible things. We’re also praying about material reality. What does the kingdom look like? Look at this picture of the reign of King Solomon.

Slide 1 Kings 4:20

²⁰The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.

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For people who are depressed, the kingdom means celebration

When you think of God coming, you should think of a party, a wedding. But not a white Protestant wedding where people stand around in the church basement drinking cups of punch and eating mints and little peanuts out of a cup because the family wanted to do the wedding on the cheap. When you think about the kingdom of God, you should

think about a Jewish wedding where the couple is carried in on big overstuffed chairs. Everyone is drinking and dancing and men are setting their hats on fire and women are doing a circle dance.

When you think about the kingdom of God coming, you should think about an Indian wedding where families spend months preparing and spend a huge part of their life savings on decorations and dance and costumes and banquets that last for days.

Do you know someone who is unhappy and really struggling with life and is depressed? One thing you can do is just pray! Lord, let your kingdom come.

Let's continue:

Slide 1 Kings 4:21-23

²¹ And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life.

²² Solomon's daily provisions were thirty cors of the finest flour and sixty cors of meal, ²³ ten head of stall-fed cattle, twenty of pasture-fed cattle and a hundred sheep and goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks and choice fowl.

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For people who are impoverished the kingdom means prosperity

Do you know anyone who is struggling financially? Know anyone struggling to get a business off the ground? Anyone who is unemployed? Anyone who just can't make ends meet even though they are working two jobs? Anyone who wants to send their kid to college, but they can't afford to do so?

There are very practical ways we come alongside impoverished people. Vineyard Columbus operates two food pantries. We feed several hundred families in our community every single week. We have hundreds of volunteers handing out groceries. By the way, if you want to help someone in our community who is hungry all you have to do is show up at one of our food pantries – come with your kids. I went with my granddaughter for a couple of years.

Slide (can we include photos?)

Northside Food Pantry
4664 Cleveland Ave.

Fifth Avenue Food Pantry
181 E. 5th Ave.

You can find these on the website. Certainly, we can help and come alongside someone and help them get a job. If you are an employer or a hiring manager you can take a risk on someone that other people aren't willing to take a risk on by offering a job, maybe to an ex-felon or someone with a learning disability or a kid who aged out of the foster care system. But one of the most practical things we can do for someone who is struggling financially is pray. Just pray! Your kingdom come to this struggling family!

What is God's kingdom like?

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For people who are at war the kingdom means shalom/peace

Slide 1 Kings 4:24-25

²⁴ For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. ²⁵ During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree.

Shalom in the Bible is sometimes translated "peace". It literally refers to the state of affairs when all is right with the world. Shalom is when somebody asks you how things are going and you say, "It's all good". I'm enjoying life and happy, especially in my relationships. My family is doing amazing. There are no conflicts. Total blessing everywhere!"

Do you know anyone who is experiencing relational conflicts? Are you at odds with anyone? Someone in your extended family, someone in your nuclear family, struggling in a relationship at work or with a friend or someone in the church? Just pray! Your kingdom come. Bring shalom, Lord. Bring peace.

What is the kingdom of God like?

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For people who need guidance the kingdom means wisdom

Slide 1 Kings 4:29-32

²⁹ God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ³² He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.

Is there anybody here who needs wisdom? I'm facing a major problem and I don't know what to do. Anyone need direction? Is there anybody here who would say, "I've got a major decision and I need to have wisdom." Just pray! Your kingdom come!

We talked about the collision of the kingdoms and the prosperity of the kingdom. As we move forward in the Bible to the book of Isaiah, we learn about the promise of the kingdom.

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Isaiah: the promise of the kingdom

Isaiah was commissioned as a prophet when he had a vision of God sitting on the throne. He was in the temple praying one day and the heavens opened. He saw God sitting on a throne and angels surrounding him worshipping. Isaiah's first vision was of the kingdom of God. From the beginning of his ministry he understood God rules. God reigns.

So Isaiah's message is all about what it looks like when God's kingdom breaks in. We know God rules. We know God reigns. But we want to experience God's rule. We want to see others experience God's rule in this world at this time.

After Isaiah saw God seated on a throne, he prophesied about a coming king, the Messiah. Here's what we read:

Slide Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

So, what will it be like when Messiah the King comes and brings his kingdom?

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For the sick the kingdom means healing

Here's what we read:

Slide Isaiah 35:5-6

⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.

Do you know anyone who's sick? We can't do a whole lot about that unless we're physicians. But we can pray. Just pray! Lord, let your kingdom come. Heal this condition.

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For the guilty the kingdom means forgiveness

Slide Isaiah 43:25

²⁵ "I, even I, am he who blots out
your transgressions, for my own sake,
and remembers your sins no more.

Do you know anyone who is weighed down by past mistakes? Anyone who is going back over things they could have done or should have done? Do you know anyone who is constantly second guessing themselves? Anyone who has tremendous regrets about what they've done or the way they've lived their lives? Or what they should have done and didn't do?

Isaiah says that when Messiah – the King – comes, he's coming to forgive sins and clear the guilty. The kingdom is forgiveness. Isaiah says,

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For the dead the kingdom means resurrection

Slide Isaiah 26:19

¹⁹ But your dead will live, LORD;
their bodies will rise—

let those who dwell in the dust
wake up and shout for joy—

your dew is like the dew of the morning;
the earth will give birth to her dead.

When Messiah comes, he will usher in the age of resurrection. All of us have lost loved ones. Some of you have lost children. Some of you have suffered miscarriages. Some of you have lost spouses. Others of us have lost parents and brothers and sisters and best friends. The book of Isaiah is all about the future time when Messiah comes. Then there's going to be no more death. Even better, those who have died will rise from the dead. Let your kingdom come, Lord!

The Messiah came. Jesus is the Messiah. That's why he's called the Christ. That's the Greek way of communicating "Jesus is the Messiah". He's the embodiment of the kingdom. When we pray "your kingdom come" we're really saying, "Jesus come. Let your Spirit come." Because wherever the Spirit of Jesus is, there is the kingdom.

Here's what we read in

Slide Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Now, the problem the first century Jews had with Jesus was they read about the kingdom of God from their Bibles. They said, Wait a minute. You're saying that the kingdom of God has come because you are the Messiah. You're saying God's rule, God's reign has broken into the world. But we know about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God means the deliverance from all oppression. We know the exodus story. The kingdom of God means prosperity and peace and wisdom. We know the Solomon story. The kingdom of God means healing and forgiveness and resurrection. We know what Isaiah prophesied. Where is all this stuff, Jesus?

What we see in the message and the ministry of Jesus is the mystery of the kingdom.

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Jesus: the mystery of the kingdom

What we find disclosed in Jesus is that God's kingdom, God's rule is going to come into the world in two stages, corresponding with the two comings of Jesus. In the first stage the kingdom is going to be hidden. It is not going to be obvious. You have to look for it and search for it. In the second stage God's kingdom will be evident and open. It is going to be overwhelming, like lightning flashing from one end of the sky to another. In the first stage God's will doesn't displace every other will. In the first stage of the

kingdom coming into the world, God's will is done, but so is the will of sinful human beings, so is the will of Satan.

In the second stage of the coming of the kingdom, when Christ returns, there will be only one will done on earth, the will of God. Right now during this era God's will doesn't always win the day. God's will can be resisted. God's will can be ignored. God's will can be crowded out of people's lives. That's why even though God's kingdom broke into the world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, we still have wars, and crime, and unhealed bodies, and mental illness, and broken marriages, and sin and addiction, and God's people are persecuted all over the globe.

The mystery of the kingdom is that the kingdom of God is here, but it hasn't replaced every other kingdom. The will of God is being done, but so is the will of sinful men and women, and so is the will of Satan. This age runs on parallel tracks – God's will and other wills. When Christ returns creation is going to run on a monorail. It is going to run on the will of God alone!

So, right now, we pray for breakthroughs. We pray that God's kingdom would supplant other kingdoms. That God's will will be done and not Satan's will or people's will. How does God's kingdom come?

God's kingdom comes as we practice the activities of kingdom living. We practice healing. We practice sharing the good news about Jesus. We practice forgiveness. We practice feeding hungry people. We practice hospitality.

And the kingdom comes when we followers of Jesus pray for the kingdom.

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Followers of Jesus: Praying for the kingdom

Brothers and sisters, there are so many situations in which we and other people need God to intervene. So many of us are living through a long winter. We need spring to come. We need God's rule to come. We need Aslan to go on the move. We need God's will to be done in a major way. God has chosen to intervene at this time to bring his rule and his will in our day through the prayers of his people. Just pray! All the things we want to see in this world that are good, all the things we want to see in our kids' lives, in the church, in our government, in our city, in my workplace – all those things – are available if God's kingdom comes." So pray "your kingdom come. Your will be done." Just pray!

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