

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: January 16, 2011  
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“THY KINGDOM COME”**  
Matthew 6:10

□ {Mt 6:10} **“Thy kingdom come.”**

The words are familiar. We say them as often as we pray the Lord’s Prayer, at least once a week.

◇ But *do we know what we are saying?*

○ The doctrine of the Kingdom can appear abstract and hard to pin down. To citizens of a democratic republic like us, the whole idea of monarchy seems distant, dated, and frankly irrelevant. But even if we lived under a human monarch, worldly kingdoms are so hugely different from God’s domain that it is difficult to draw accurate conclusions about his realm from theirs.

👑 However, we do not have to pray in ignorance! Our catechism accurately states that **“The kingdom of God is the reign of God expressed in the hearts and lives of his people both now and through eternity.”**

📖 (As a noun, “reign” means *the government of a king of queen*. As a verb, it means *to rule with royal authority and power*.)

◆ Brief as it is, the catechism covers a lot of ground. It identifies: the Kingdom’s monarch (the God of the Bible); his subjects (the people); the Kingdom’s spatial location (wherever God’s people are); its defining signs (heartfelt allegiance and practical obedience to God); as well as its temporal location (within created time, and also in eternity). Although this only begins to scratch the surface, it lays a firm foundation for a deeper grasp of the Kingdom.

🌀 Put it together and you end up with something like: {Keller} **“our Father, Ruler of heaven and earth, whose authority is utterly [supreme] throughout the universe, come and establish Your sovereignty in [our] hearts... and upon the earth.”** LORD Almighty, King of the Universe, we fervently implore you: reign with power and glory in, through and among us, our families, our communities, and our entire world! That is the gist of our prayer.

◇ But *do we mean it?*

👉 Surely, most of us recite the Lord’s Prayer with some sincerity. Who does not anticipate the day when Holy God will fully establish his just and merciful reign? Who does not want Mighty God to utterly “[shatter] **the yoke that burdens**” (Isaiah 9:6)? Who does not long for {Mt6:9} **“Our Father in heaven”** to come and “[reward]” his **“people who revere [his] name”** (Revelation 11:18)? **“Thy kingdom come,”** indeed!

◇ But *do we mean it the way Jesus meant it?*

👑 It is one thing to pray, **“Thy kingdom come”** when I assume it is all in the future, that God does not yet require me to live by its precepts, and that it will not complicate my earthly life. It is another to pray it when we are aware that, though the Kingdom won’t be completed until the Second Coming, it is also a present reality. Jesus declared, {Lk 17:21} **“the kingdom of God is in your midst.”** God demands our highest loyalty today, and expects his kingship to transform our relations with people (including our own bodies and minds), institutions, work, money, time, and so on.

*Do we really mean what we are saying?*

👑 It is one thing to pray, “**Thy kingdom come**” when I consider it a minor matter of interest mainly to ivory tower theologians. It is another to pray it when we comprehend that the Kingdom was at the heart of Jesus’ incarnational mission and message. In the Gospels He uses the title “**the kingdom of God**” or its equivalent, “**kingdom of heaven**” in 63 separate sayings. Add in parallel references and that number jumps to 87! Jesus’ words *proclaimed* God’s Kingdom, his miracles *proved* it, his relationships *exemplified* it, and his death, resurrection, and ascension *empowered* it.

*Do we really mean what we are saying?*

👑 It is one thing to pray, “**Thy kingdom come**” when I conceive of Kingdom citizenship mainly as a lifestyle of comfort. It is another to pray it when we perceive that the invitation to be God’s subject is also a call to discipleship. What did Jesus say? {Lk 9:23} “**Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.**” Don’t get me wrong: there is no greater comfort than God’s presence, no peace like the peace He gives his people! Yet {Lk 9:24} “**whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for [Christ] will save it.**”

*Do we really mean what we are saying?*

👑 It is one thing to pray, “**Thy kingdom come**” when I expect to earn admission to it on the basis of my moral goodness, spiritual effort, or community service, the good I do and the bad I avoid. It is another to pray it when we find

that access to the Kingdom depends solely on true faith and humble repentance. As Jesus told the priests, {Mt 21:31} “**Tax collectors and... prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you,**” for many of those sinners obeyed the summons to repent and trust the Messiah, while most of the religious leaders did not.

*Do we really mean what we are saying?*

👑 It is one thing to pray, “**Thy kingdom come**” when I misread God’s mercy toward sinners as tolerance of sin and presume that God will ignore my disobedience. It is another to pray it when we know that his grace is a catalyst for purification and self-control. Jesus said, {Mk 9:47} “**If your eye causes you to [sin], pluck it out. It is better to enter the kingdom with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell.**” His point is that we must take drastic action to resist sin. Don’t forget: after Jesus rescued the adulteress from death he commanded her, {Jn 8:11} “**leave your life of sin.**”

*Do we really mean what we are saying?*

👑 It is one thing to pray, “**Thy kingdom come**” when I dream that it is a private reality, (that is, personal salvation, received individually and exercised independently). It is another to pray it when we realize that the kingdom is as public as it is personal. Kingdom citizens {1 Pet 2:9} “**are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation**” {Eph 2:21} “**joined together... to become a holy temple.**” Christ Jesus does not comment directly on the communal quality of

Kingdom life, probably because his first listeners did not think of it in individual terms. However, his teachings reveal that the Kingdom is corporate in nature.

*Do we really mean what we are saying?*

👑 It is one thing to pray, “**Thy kingdom come**” when I imagine that God’s only priority is my piety (religious devotion and purity) and that He calls me to withdraw from the world to achieve it. It is another thing to pray it when we discover that God gives equal priority to piety and love, and that this requires us to rub shoulders with broken and godless sinners, without compromising piety. To whom will the King say, {Mt 25:34} “**Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take... the kingdom prepared for you**”? Those who fed, welcomed, clothed, and visited even the prodigals, in Jesus’ Name!

*Do we really mean what we are saying?*

The gist of “**Thy kingdom come**” is: LORD Almighty, King of the Universe, we fervently implore you: reign with power and glory in, through and among us, our families, our communities, and our entire world!

⊕ In light of our discussion we can add that “**Thy kingdom come**” is also a commitment to cooperate with God for the fulfillment of this petition. Each time we pray “**Thy kingdom come**” we relinquish the rule of our lives, giving up self-government in submission to God. It is our pledge to manifest God’s Kingdom by thinking, speaking, acting and interacting as his loyal, devoted, effective subjects.

☑ Perish the thought that this is an easy formality! {NT Wright, p 32} “**No: this is the risky, crazy prayer of**

**submission and commission, or, if you like, the prayer of subversion** [in which we commit ourselves to the subversion of the kingdom of this world] **and conversion. It is the way we sign on ... for the work of the kingdom.**”

☹ If that sounds difficult and dangerous, you are right. Better yet, *for us* it is impossible. *I* do not have the resolve, *you* do not have the willpower, *we* do not have the strength of character to actually be God’s ideal subjects for more than a few minutes at a time. No mere mortal does!

But remember: “**Thy kingdom come**” is a prayer. It is a way for puny creatures of dust like us to connect with God Almighty, King of the Universe.

We make our feeble attempts to listen to the LORD in prayer, and He condescends to speak to us. We take our turn to speak, and his kindness and mercy “**Our Father who art in heaven**” listens.

And when – despite our deficient understanding and mixed motives and chronic failure – our request corresponds to God’s perfect will, He acts upon it. “**Thy kingdom come,**” with our implicit commitment to be his subjects and manifest his Kingdom, is always pleasing to God.

The timing of his plan, and the means by which He will accomplish it, are a mystery. But {Php 1:6} “**he who began a good work in [us] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**”

“**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.**” May we really mean the words that we pray!