

Sermon Transcript
October 2, 2011

Lord, Teach us to Pray

“Thy Kingdom Come”
Selected Passages

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on October 2, 2011, at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Pastor Scott Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio copy of the sermon on CD is available by request at (860) 563-8286. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church web-site at www.wethefc.com.

Scripture Passages

Mark 1:14-15

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Isaiah 9:6-7

6“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

Mark 4:11

4 The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables.”

Mark 14:25

25 “Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

Introduction

We are learning how to pray. Through this series on the Lord's Prayer, we are asking Jesus, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" We have discovered through the Lord's Prayer that God is not just interested that we pray, but He is also interested in "what" we pray. The Lord's Prayer was the answer to the question asked of Jesus in Luke 11. When Jesus was asked by one of the disciples "*Lord, teach us to pray,*" Jesus simply responded by saying, "*When you pray, say . . .*" And then he gave them the Lord's Prayer. Through this prayer, Jesus is telling us what to pray when we pray. So we are studying this prayer so that we can align our prayers with the very heart of God.

This prayer ought to cause you to rethink the purpose for prayer. We don't pray to try to get God to do what we want God to do. Rather, prayer is designed to get us to do what God wants us to do. Prayer is getting onboard with God's agenda. We readily admit that prayer most definitely changes things. But who does it change? Does it change God or does it change us? Prayer is the means by which God changes us. This prayer is forcing us to evaluate our motives for prayer. It is teaching us that the deepest note in prayer ought to be for God's glory, God's kingdom and God's will. This prayer teaches us how to "*seek first the kingdom of God.*"

I hope you are using this series to help you build your prayer list. We have already discovered some specific requests that ought to be on our daily prayer list. Everyday you ought to be praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit because you need His power to live for God's glory, advance God's kingdom and to comprehend and obey God's will. Also, I think we should be asking Jesus each day to teach us how to pray. "*Our Father in heaven, thank you for the wonderful gift of prayer. It is amazing to know that as this prayer leaves my heart and my lips it actually comes before your ears and you hear it and gladly receive it. Send your Holy Spirit upon us this morning that we might comprehend your truth and that we might be drawn even more to the Savior. Like the two men who encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus, may your words "burn within us" and may they reach deep into our hearts and create within us a greater understanding of how you want us to pray and may it lead us to become people of prayer. Come Holy Spirit, teach us to pray.*"

There are six requests to this prayer and we are taking the time to look carefully at each request. We want to gain a better understanding of what each request means and then we want to learn how to pray that request back to God. For example, we discovered that the request "*Hallowed be thy name*" was a request that God would be glorified in our lives and in the world. It reminded us that the purpose for our lives is to serve God. We exist for God. He made us! Therefore, we pray that God would be glorified in our lives, in our homes, in our work, in our trials, in everything we do. We pray that the fame of God would spread throughout the world and that others would join us in bringing glory to God.

Thy Kingdom Come

This morning we come to the second request in this wonderful prayer, “*Thy kingdom come.*” What are we praying when we pray this prayer? “*Our Father, which art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.*” It is a very familiar phrase to many of us. We are always talking about “the kingdom.” If you have spent any time in church, no doubt you have recited this request numerous times. But I wonder, this morning, do you comprehend what it is that you are praying for when you pray, “*thy kingdom come?*” What is the focus of this request? What does Jesus want us to pray about when he gives us this request?

The “*kingdom of God*” is not some side issue in the story of the Bible. It is the main issue of the Bible. The message of the Bible can be summarized as “the story of God’s kingdom.”¹ In fact, this is how Jesus couches the gospel. I wonder how many of you would put the phrase “*kingdom of God*” with the gospel? If I asked you what the gospel is, most of you would speak in terms of the cross and your salvation. That is the “good news” isn’t it? Jesus has saved us through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead! But that is not how Jesus refers to the gospel. We read in Mark 1:14-15, “*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, . . .*” So what is Jesus “saying” about the gospel? What is the “good news” Jesus brought with himself and his message? Here it is, “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*”

The “good news” Jesus came announcing was that the “*kingdom of God*” has come. Matthew 4:17 says, “*From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven [God] is near.”* Over a hundred times in the gospels you find Jesus talking about the kingdom. In the book of Acts, right before His ascension, we read in Acts 1:3, “*He appeared to [the disciples] over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*” The kingdom of God is the message of Jesus. It is the beginning, the middle and the end of the teaching ministry of Jesus. The “*kingdom of God*” is the gospel.

Our salvation is an outcome of the coming of God’s kingdom to earth, and it is a wonderful outcome. Our sins have been forgiven! We have eternal life! That is good news. But it is not the ultimate focus of the gospel. Dare I say this? “WE” are not the ultimate focus of the gospel. I am not denying that God loves us. He definitely does. But as the Lord’s Prayer reminds us, God’s glory always comes first. Therefore, the ultimate focus of the gospel is God. The “good news” that Jesus brought in his coming is that the “*kingdom of God*” has come. The King himself has come and God’s good rule has come to this fallen world in the person of Jesus. “*Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King.*” That is the “good news” of the “*kingdom of God.*”

It is with this in mind, I would like to share with you “Four R’s of the Kingdom.” These four words, beginning with the letter “R”, will help us understand something about the “*kingdom of God*” and will help us pray this prayer Jesus has instructed us to pray. Let these “Four R’s of the Kingdom” shape your prayers this coming week.

The Four R’s of the Kingdom: The Rule of God

The first “R” of the Kingdom is the “rule of God.” When we are talking about the “*kingdom of God*” we are ultimately talking about God’s rule and reign over all things. It is “God’s” kingdom. This kingdom has a king and as we will see, this king is Jesus, the Son of God. What do kings do? They reign over the kingdom. They have all authority.

The day of “kings” and “kingdoms” seems to be a concept we don’t relate to very well in our day and in our country. We are about democracies not monarchies. Our country was founded by rebelling against the monarchy of King George III and ever since our motto has been “We the people.” I am good with that and I love the country where we live and the freedoms we enjoy. But because we are so engrained with the concept of democracy, it may be hard for us to understand this notion of a kingdom and the rule of a king. But that is what the kingdom of God is. It is the recognition of God’s good and rightful rule over his people and over his creation. George Eldon Ladd says it this way. “The kingdom of God is God’s kingship, God’s rule, God’s authority.”²

Last week we mentioned that everything that has come into being was made by God. God has made it all. Therefore, we noticed that since God made all things, all things, then, exist for God. If God made it, God is the rightful ruler of it. There is something inside of us that chafes at the notion that someone has the right to rule us. And yet when we see the description of all God made in Genesis 1 and 2 all we see is “good.” Everything God made was described as being “good.” In fact, today, whenever you hear someone talk about “the Garden of Eden” or of “Paradise” you think of something that is of ultimate good. You think of “utopia.” When you say, “It was paradise!”, what you are saying is that “it was as close to good as you can get.” But there was “Paradise” when God created the world. D. A. Carson says it this way. “You discover that there is no hint in Genesis 1-2 of death or decay, of butchery, malice, hate, one-upmanship, arrogance, pride or destruction.”³ It sure sounds like “paradise” to me. I would love to live in a “kingdom” like that and under a ruler who could deliver such a kingdom as that. That is exactly the kind of ruler God is. He is the rightful ruler of this world by virtue of the fact that he made it. “*You are worthy our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things and by your will they came into being.*”

Tomorrow night we will begin a seven-week training on how to share your faith. We will be teaching a method of how to share the gospel. One of the things I love about this

presentation of the gospel is that it is truly a gospel presentation that presents the “*kingdom of God*” to people. Listen to how the presentation starts. “God is the loving ruler of the world.”⁴ In the very first sentence of this gospel presentation you are introduced to the “*kingdom of God.*” Remember, God’s kingdom is God’s rule. God is the loving ruler of the world because he made the world. Then the presentation says this, “He made us rulers of the world under him.” Man is the crowning touch of God’s creation and we were to rule over all that God had made by living under God’s good rule.

But do you know what happened? Like the thirteen colonies who rebelled against King George III and who declared independence from the throne, can you believe we did the same thing to God? We declared our independence from God and we did not want God to rule over us. We wanted to rule our own lives without God. So, consequently, God let us do it. But with that rebellion came death and the curse of sin on God’s creation. This independence put strife between the husband and the wife. Discord didn’t take long to turn to murder as we saw in Genesis 4. Pain and suffering became the norm and we did not do a good job ruling this world on our own. We made a mess of our lives, our society and our world. But most of all, because we rejected God, we were alienated and separated from God, who is life itself. Carson says,

“If God is the Creator and gives life, then if you detach yourself from this God, if you defy this God, what is there but death? He is the one who gave life in the first place. He did not bring the universe and his own image bearers into existence so that they might be completely autonomous from him, somehow achieving the self-existence that belongs only to God. So if one walks away from God, what is there but death? If you pronounce your own good and evil and decide you want to be a god yourself, thus detaching yourself from the living God who made you and who alone gives life, there is nothing but death.”⁵

We are about a year away from the next presidential election and this week the big question was whether or not the governor from New Jersey, Chris Christie, would run for president. He gave a speech this week at a news conference that sounded a lot like a “political stump speech” and yet to this point he has given the impression that he is not going to run for President of the United States of America. After his speech, he took questions and comments from the audience and there was one woman who made a passionate plea for him to reconsider because in her mind the country desperately needs him to set things right in our country. What struck me about her passionate plea is the recognition of how important our leaders are at creating an environment for peace and prosperity. And yet, at the same time, I can’t help but think of how inadequate our political leaders are at issuing in “the paradise” we all long for. In our hearts, we long for what only Jesus can bring to us in the “*kingdom of God.*” “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*”

So when you pray “*thy kingdom come*” ultimately you are praying for the good rule and reign of Jesus to be established once again over all of his creation. You are saying, “*Dear God, forgive us for rebelling against your good rule over us. Forgive us for wanting to live life without you. We have made a royal mess of our lives and of your creation. We long for your good rule over us. Reign in our hearts. Reign in your church. Hasten the day when all of your creation will live under the blessing of your good rule. Thank you, that in Jesus Christ, you have once again begun the process of establishing your kingdom throughout your creation. Lord reign in us.*”

The Four R’s of the Kingdom: The Restoration of Creation

The second “R” of the Kingdom is “the restoration of creation.” When Jesus said at the beginning of his ministry that “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*” it gives you the impression that the coming of Jesus and the coming of the kingdom of God was something that had been anticipated. Something had been promised in the past and now in the coming of Jesus it was being fulfilled.

At Christmas time we read of some of these promises of old and we identify Jesus as the fulfillment of these promises. For example, during the season of Advent we often read and heard sung Isaiah 9:6-7. “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*” Did you notice all the “kingdom language” in these verses? This child, who is to come, will establish God’s kingdom and he will be a good ruler for he is a “*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” [sounds like good qualifications for a political candidate] and he will bring to this troubled world, “peace.” And so when Jesus is born, we get to read the most wonderful birth announcement ever made, “*Glory to God on the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.*” Through the coming of Jesus, God is restoring this fallen world by sending Jesus, the perfect God-man, as the ruler of this world.

Jesus has come and Jesus has gone and you scratch your head and look around at this troubled world and you ask “where’s the peace?” Where is the “*the kingdom of God?*” Things seem to be just as bad in this fallen world as they have ever been. Where is the “*kingdom of God?*” It is the same question the disciples were wrestling with as well when Jesus came. They asked Jesus in Acts 1:6, after his resurrection from the dead, “*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel.*” They knew that the coming of the Messiah would bring the promised “*kingdom of God*” and they knew that it would

ultimately restore all of creation. They knew that one day the “*kingdom of God*” would usher in lasting peace, just like it was in the Garden of Eden. But what they didn’t know about is what Jesus referred to as the “mystery of the kingdom.”

Here is the “mystery of the kingdom.” In one sense, this “*kingdom of God*” and this promise of peace is still future hope and will be realized when Jesus returns again. But don’t be fooled. The “*kingdom of God*” is also a present reality. It is here. It is here, growing in the midst of the kingdom of this world. St. Augustine, of the fifth century, wrote the famous book *The City of God*. In that book he said that there are two kingdoms in this world: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. One kingdom is ruled by God and the other by Satan. One kingdom longs for the things of God and the other kingdom rebels against God. These kingdoms are in conflict with one another and we live in the tension of that conflict. Jesus lived in the tension of that conflict. He even told the Pharisees, in Luke 17:25, that the establishment of the kingdom of God involved his own suffering and rejection. He suffered and was rejected by the kingdom of man. But his suffering did not deny the reality and the power of the kingdom of God. Furthermore, the suffering of Jesus set the example and the tone for what it means for us to live in the kingdom of God today. It does not mean the absence of suffering. It means faith in the presence of suffering.

Ladd put it this way. “The Mystery of the Kingdom is this: that the Kingdom which will one day change the entire external order has entered into This Age in advance, to bring the blessings of God’s Kingdom to men and women without transforming the old order. The old age is going on, yet men may already enjoy the powers of the Age to Come.”⁶ And what are the powers we enjoy today in the “*Kingdom of God*?” Because of the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross, our lives have been restored to God. We have peace in our lives. We have a relationship with the God and inside of us resides the Holy Spirit and he is making us into a new creation. The “*Kingdom of God*” is here today it is restoring broken lives through the work of the cross and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This week I was in Allentown, PA visiting with my parents. On Wednesday night I had the privilege of speaking to the people of an inner city church where my parents are currently serving. During the time of worship my mom starting pointing out people to me. She said, “See that man up there? He was in a gang and spent time in prison in Puerto Rico for murder. But God has gotten a hold of his life and he is a new man. He is one of our key Bible teachers, he has a good job and that is his wife over there.” When the singing was over, he came down and tenderly greeted his wife with a kiss. That is the kingdom of God breaking into this age and restoring God’s creation.

Then my mom pointed to a woman. She had recently come to faith in Jesus Christ and has a few children to a man she had lived with for 28 years. Upon coming to Christ, she

knew she had to live under “God’s good rule” and so she told this man she had been living with that he had three months to marry her or he had to leave. She couldn’t live like this anymore. He refused to marry her and he made things very difficult for her. He eventually left and my mom said that every now and then he will come to church and sit right in front of her just to antagonize her. And yet after the service, talking with her, there was a radiant smile and a look of peace that comes only from the *Prince of Peace*. In Jesus the “*Kingdom of God*” has come into this broken world and God is in the process of restoring all of creation. Right now He is doing it one person at a time.

Many of you can give testimony to the present reality of the change that Jesus is doing in your life. Through coming to faith in Jesus Christ, through confessing your sin, relying on the work of the cross and submitting to Jesus as the rule of your life; your sins are forgiven, you are right with God and the Holy Spirit is changing you and filling you with peace.

So when we pray this prayer, “*Thy kingdom come*” we are praying for the restoring work of God in our own lives and in the lives of others. We are praying, “*Dear Father, as your kingdom comes into my life through faith in Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit I would ask that you would restore my broken life. Change me. Restore my relationship with you and fill me with peace that surpasses understanding. I pray this for your church as well. Create within us the kind of peace and transformation that would cause others to hunger and thirst for Jesus. May your kingdom come.*”

The Four R’s of the Kingdom: The Reaping of a Harvest

The third “R” of the “*Kingdom of God*” is the “reaping of a harvest.” When you are praying for the “*kingdom of God*” you are praying for the spread of the gospel. Jesus said it this way in John 3:3, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” In the coming of Jesus and the “*kingdom of God*”, Jesus conquered sin and death through his death and resurrection and now through faith, people can come into the wonderful “*kingdom of God.*”

Jesus often taught in parables and he called these parables “*secrets of the kingdom.*” He said to his disciples in Mark 4:11, “*The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables.*” In Matthew 13, we have listed for us a series of these parables revealing to us the “secrets of the kingdom.” In real quick fashion, I would like to identify these “secrets” for you and they are listed on your prayer sheet as well for further reflection this week and I would encourage you to look at them, meditate on them and pray them.

The first parable is the “Parable of the Four Soils” and in this parable the seed is scattered and it falls on four different kinds of soil but only the good soil leads to producing fruit. So it is

with the “*kingdom of God.*” As the Word of God is proclaimed there are different reactions to the gospel of God’s kingdom. Some will reject it and others will receive it. But the way the “*kingdom of God*” spreads is through the proclamation of Jesus. So pray for the preaching of and the teaching of the Word. So pray for the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus. Pray that the seed of God’s Word would fall on good soil. That is praying for the coming of God’s kingdom into the hearts of people.

The next parable in Matthew 13 is the “Parable of the Weeds” and in this parable we are reminded we are living in this age when God’s people and the people of this world live together and we recognize that these two kingdoms live in constant tension. One reason this tension exists is because we are in the minority. That is the point of the “Parable of the Mustard Seed” and the “Parable of the Leaven.” Right now it seems as though the kingdom of God is insignificant in this world. It doesn’t seem like the “*kingdom of God*” and the rule of Christ is bringing about the peace that was promised. Yet one day, like leaven the permeates the entire loaf and like the mustard plant grows from a small seed, God’s kingdom will fill the earth. So pray for faithfulness and perseverance, knowing full well that God’s kingdom is advancing and will fill the earth. In fact, the “Parable of the Hidden Treasure” and the “Parable of the Pearl of Great Price” reminds us during this day and this age that even though it seems like the “*kingdom of God*” is insignificant, we know that it is of greatest value and worth living for and sharing with others.

Finally, Jesus ends in Matthew 13 with the “Parable of the Nets” where we learn at the end of this age “*the kingdom of God*” will come in full and there will be a final separation between the people of God and the people of this world. Therefore, it is our job and our task to share the message of the kingdom with as many people as possible.

I read an article this week by Stephen Lutz called “*5 Necessary Shifts for Missional College Ministry.*”⁷ In this article, he was calling for several shifts that need to be made as we try to reach the college campus for Christ. Listen to the title of the third shift he thinks needs to be made: “From Head Counting to Seed Spreading.” He is challenging campus ministries to reconsider what they count as success. Is success in ministry defined by how many people you have in attendance at a meeting or by how many people have been equipped and are active in spreading the news of the “*kingdom of God?*” Can we bring that question closer to home here at WEFC? Are we more successful today than we were last year if there are more people in attendance at a morning service? Is that the measure of success? Is that the measure of faithfulness? Or is “kingdom success” defined in our obedience to God by “spreading the seed of the Gospel” and praying that it would find good soil and consequently spring up for eternal life? I think the latter is the barometer of “success” or “faithfulness.”

So when we pray “*thy kingdom come*” we are praying: *Heavenly Father, thank you for doing a work in our hearts; that we have received the gospel and that we are now members of your*

kingdom. We pray that your kingdom would advance in the hearts of people. We pray for the effective preaching and proclamation of the gospel, whether it be from the pulpits of the world or the one-on-one conversations we have day in and day out. We pray for opportunities to give testimony to Jesus. We pray for perseverance when we face ridicule and feel all alone, for we know we possess the “pearl of great price” in Jesus Christ. We pray that your people would be burdened and equipped to share this wonderful news so that your kingdom would continually grow. Please light the candle in our church on a regular basis through the testimony of your people.

The Four R’s of the Kingdom: The Return of Christ

The final “R” of the kingdom is a prayer that prays for the “return of Christ.” When you pray “*thy kingdom come*” you are ultimately praying for the second coming of Jesus; when all the blessings of the kingdom will come and bring the final restoration of all things and when God’s will dwell in all of his glory with man.

In a few moments, we will be celebrating the Lord’s Supper. On the night Jesus instituted this meal he said at the end of it in Mark 14:25 “*Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*” I think Jesus is referring to that future day when final marriage supper of the Lamb will be celebrated and full fellowship will be experienced with God and with his people. This table not only looks back to the events of the cross, but it also looks forward and reminds us that there is yet a coming day when the “*kingdom of God*” will come in full and restore all of God’s creation. What a day that will be. And so when we pray “*they kingdom come*” we are simply praying the prayer John prays at the end of the Bible, “*Even so, come Lord Jesus!*”

Conclusion

I would encourage you this week to pray the “Four R’s of the Kingdom.” In fact, I would encourage you to pray these “Four R’s of the Kingdom” as you hold the elements in your hands this morning.

Pray for the good RULE of Christ to govern your heart God’s people.

Pray for the RESTORATION of your life and for God’s people through the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Pray for the REAPING of a HARVEST and commit yourself to share the message of the kingdom of God with others.

Pray for the RETURN of Jesus Christ when all things will be restored

Pray - “*Thy Kingdom Come!*”

¹M. Brain, M. A. Malcolm, M. R. Malcolm *The Bible Overview: Leaders Guide* (Kingsford Australia: Matthias Media, 2001) 19

²George Eldon Ladd *Gospel of the Kingdom* (Mansfield Center: Martino Publishing 2011) 21

³D. A. Carson *The God Who Is There* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010) 20

⁴*Two Ways To Live* Gospel presentation by Matthias Media <http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/>

⁵Carson, 34

⁶Ladd, 67

⁷Stephen Lutz *5 Necessary Shifts for Missional College Ministry* <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/09/30/5-necessary-shifts-for-missional-college-ministry/>

© by Dr. Scott Solberg- All rights reserved