

Matthew 6:10

Heralds of the Kingdom of God

This past week we experienced the aftermath of hurricane Irma. Many of us were between two circumstances, circumstances that were here as we looked up at our blue skies, and circumstances that were coming, as we heard that a massive hurricane would have a tremendous impact on us. We all watched gas prices go up, then bread and milk start to disappear from the shelves, and then watched the television as every news network, weatherman, and elected official told those who would be most impacted by the storm to evacuate. People fled by the millions! Some of my family came up to stay with other members of my family, some of your family or friends did too. Some of my family rode out the storm, some of yours did too. We were all waiting because we had seen the news, had heard something was coming, and sure enough, the skies in our neck of the woods turned black, and the wind started to howl.

The reason so much attention was given to this hurricane was because of what happened not even a month ago – Houston hit by a category 4 hurricane with wind speeds up to 130 mph. After the major devastation that Harvey left, most of us were more attentive when we were told that we would feel the impact of another category 4 storm. It's amazing how people will listen when their world has been rocked.

Now, I want to ask you a question. Is there anything right now that you are waiting for with expectancy? Every follower of Jesus Christ should without hesitation say, Yes! We are waiting with joyful anticipation the soon coming of the Lord. We are waiting and longing for the day when we will look into the heavens and sing, "Joy to the world; the Lord has come, let earth receive her King."

Sounds like a wonderful thought, but do we live with this expectancy? Are our lives characterized by being lost by the anticipation of the coming, unstoppable, kingdom of God? Jesus has come and in his coming, has taught us to pray, and by prayer we mean he has come to set the posture of our heart. Jesus sets the posture of our heart with hope, and today we get to look at the hope of all those who claim Christ as King – Thy Kingdom Come. Let's read the text together:

READ TEXT

Look back at verse 10. There are two phrases that go together – Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. For our purposes, today I want to focus on the first phrase – Thy kingdom come. Thy kingdom come is the hope that we hold not only for ourselves but hope that we hold for the entire earth. A King is coming to establish an everlasting peace, a forever rest. This kingdom is unlike anything the world has ever known and right now the light of the dawn of this kingdom has already begun to bring this new day. Did you hear what I said? Unlike anything we have even known – future hope – and right now the dawn has come – present reality. Present reality, future hope. We have to hold these two truths together if we are to understand the dynamics of the Kingdom of God.

I know that we are biting off a big topic today. I mean we are only talking about the future of the whole universe – no biggie. But there are a few things that we need to know if we are to hold this prayer dear in our hearts. We must understand, we are heralding a message, announcing a message to the world full of unbelief. Our message is the same as Jesus', the Kingdom of God is at hand and so we pray now in the present in the hope of the future when one day the Kingdom will come in its fullest sense.

What message are we declaring when we pray Thy Kingdom Come?

First, God Is King

We are at a certain time in history where the kingdom of God and the kingship of God refer to two different things. God doesn't become king; he is king. The Bible never paints a picture where God is not sovereignly ruling over all things. This is what we mean when we use phrases like the sovereignty of God. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a way to categorize our minds around the complete awe-inspiring truth that God causes all things to work together for the good of those that love God and are called according to his purpose. Men may intend things for evil, but God can take the evil intentions of men and weave a tapestry of grace. God rules over the whole world and all that happens in it. He is never helpless, never has his hands tied, never frustrated or at a loss, always and completely in control no matter how deep the scheming of man.

When we pray Thy kingdom come we are appealing to the one who stretches the heavens out like a tent and set his throne above them. When we pray Thy kingdom come we are appealing to the only certainty in the universe. One day taxes will be no more, death will be done away with, but God will remain. He is the sovereign king who rules over all. We are praying to him who is king, not appealing for him to become what he isn't already. We want the truth to prevail over unbelief, and so we pray this way.

Second, when we pray Thy Kingdom Come we are declaring that There is Something Better

The hope of this prayer is easy to spot. We are praying for a kingdom to come. Some have already picked up on this point from the last point. You say, if God is King then why so much suffering? If God is king, then why this evil? This bears repeating, again and again, evil does nothing to diminish the kingship of God. We experience pain and suffering right now because evil has come into the world. And how did evil come into the world? Evil came into the world through rebellion. Rebellion is the right word to use to describe the present condition of our world filled with suffering and pain. Rebellion is the right word to describe a world where we find ourselves always in the constant danger of death.

When God created man what did he do? He spoke to Adam and Eve. Does God speak today? Sure, he does. How? In his Word. This book that we hold in our hands is not just literature, not just a recollection of historical events, it is all those things but not just those things. This is God's

revelation to us, the disclosure of himself. He has spoken and established the universe and told us about himself. In Genesis God speaks, don't miss this. Adam then names the animals, so Adam is now speaking. Adam is given authority to name the animals and Adam gets it right. But man is not left to define anything else. God comes and tells the man and woman to leave a certain tree alone, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Otherwise, they would die. Why is he telling them this? Two reasons, it is the truth, and God wants his creatures to trust him. Trust me, don't touch that tree, believe me, whatever you do, don't do it. God defines reality, Adam defines reality as he sees it and then God comes in and sets the limits and says trust me. When they fell, they chose to call God a liar. But was God a liar? God defined reality and what he said would happen, happened. The whole world has felt the results as man enjoyed their rebellion. But that rebellion is only for a time. And the fact that we say that points to our hope.

Listen to this verse in Romans to see what I am trying to communicate. Paul says,

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:18-25)

Who is going to set creation free? God allowing the subjection means that his sovereignty was not diminished, which means because he is king he will set creation free. And interestingly, we can almost miss this, the suffering that we experience is called the pains of childbirth and not the pains of death. Why? Because of our hope that the king has secured for us. When we pray Thy kingdom come we are making a declaration on enemy territory that the way things are right now are not the way that things are going to be and so we march through this life under the banner of hope as we pray Thy kingdom come.

Thirdly, when we pray Thy Kingdom Come we are declaring The King Has Brought the Better

Remember who it is that is teaching us to pray this prayer – Jesus. Who is Jesus? The One sent from the Father. Why was he sent? To seek and save the lost ones. How does he save? He saves in his coming. His coming secured salvation for us. Yes, he died on the Cross for our sins and rose again, but the one who died for us was the same one who lived life vicariously for us. That is, he lives perfectly the life that we needed to live and then gives us his very life. He is not just our example; he is our life.

How does he live? He loves, he heals, he forgives. He feeds the hungry, he fights demons, he heals the sick, he cleansed lepers, he raises the dead. All as he is proclaiming – the Kingdom is at

hand. Light is breaking through. Then he dies and is raised alive from death. Interestingly, and we will get there eventually, Matthew does not have an ascension passage. Why? He wants to emphasize the Kingdom of God is at hand!

If you pay attention to every page of the Old Testament, you will see it longing for a promised hope to take what was lost and restore it. From the rebellion of mankind in the beginning to a promised one coming from the seed of a woman, to Abraham, to David, to the message of the Prophets of a future worldwide restoration, every hope of the Bible has been met by the person of our One Lord Jesus Christ – true God of true God.

You might say, "How can you say that the King has brought the better? Look around. There is disease, famine, war, evil. How can you say that the coming of Jesus has changed the world? Now you're just spouting that pie-in-the-sky religion stuff." I think we all agree, this message sounds incredible, almost even idealistic, or we may say it another way, it sounds hopeful. Think of the ministry of Jesus. He comes miraculously, lives miraculously, while he is living he invites others to follow him, then he dies and then comes to life miraculously. He appears to his disciples and many other witnesses alive, and then he leaves.

But he doesn't just leave, does he? He left with a promise. As he ascends up to heaven with the marks of crucifixion on him, he tells his disciples that he is with them and is coming again. And that's not the end of the story. Suddenly the same Spirit who descended upon Jesus at his baptism ascends on his followers and they go into every corner of the earth with a message – The Kingdom of God is at hand, and they pray, Thy kingdom come. Hope has entered the world. And once the antidote has entered the bloodstream there is no going back. The disease may hold on a bit longer, but ultimately the disease is defeated the moment the antidote is administered. It may take a while for the rest of the body to respond, but the remedy to the world has been delivered, healing has risen with the Sun of Righteousness, and now we are waiting on the rest of the world to catch up.

This is why we don't just stand in our corners, we fight for justice and engage when we see injustice. We can't just let it go – Jesus is King. This is why we call men to repent and go into the deepest darkest corners of the world - the King has come, paved the way, has given us marching orders, and has empowered us by his Spirit to declare Jesus is King. Martin Luther understood this. He said,

I was born to fight devils and factions. It is my business to remove obstacles, to cut down thorns, to fill us quagmires and to open and make straight paths. If I must have some failing let me rather speak the truth with too great sincerity than once to act the hypocrite and conceal the truth.

But ultimately, we hold this truth before us and the world. The King who came and conquered death, who removed the sting of sin is coming. Fourthly, when we pray Thy Kingdom Come, we are declaring with great hope in our present situation The King Will Bring the Better.

Jesus is coming. When we pray Thy Kingdom Come we dare not pray this in a light-hearted manner. This is the hope of our hearts, and so we pray this prayer with fervor and expectancy. But do you pray this prayer with expectancy? Do you have this perspective that our Lord is calling us to, or are you setting your hope on other things? If we are honest, some of our hearts might be in a more delicate place. We pray this prayer, but we don't mean it. We like the idea of the Lord coming back as long as he holds off for just a bit longer until I finish my degree, get to hold my baby or grandbaby, as long as I get to see my kids grow up, the list goes on and on and on. Are we clinging to this hope for dear life – Jesus is coming - or are we satisfied with trudging through life chasing ghosts?

His kingdom coming is as sure as day. And when he comes I hope that he finds us eagerly and faithfully waiting. How do we show our eagerness? We go about praying this prayer not just in our closets, but we make this declaration everywhere. To our family, Thy Kingdom Come. At our job, Thy Kingdom Come. In our church, Thy Kingdom Come. And we agree with Scripture:

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. (Revelation 22:17-21)