

Thy Kingdom Come

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Mark 4:26-29

Although many years have passed from this event– exactly 25 years ago– the story that I will tell is an incredible illustration God’s work on this earth. A young couple who had recently lost a newborn child, had a terrible accident when their three-year-old boy ran away from a shop and a car hit him and killed him. Having lost both her boys, the mother was in deep mourning. The driver who hit the child was mourning as well. The mother was a friend of ours and the driver was from my church parish. I was praying and asking God for wisdom how to handle this complex situation. When I visited the mourning family, the mother asked me to go and bring the driver so they could mourn together. She said: “ This was not his fault. Go and bring this young man. Let us cry together.”

That day, the kingdom of God came into a broken world.

“Your kingdom come.” (Matthew 6:10a ESV)

This is the second petition Jesus makes to his Abba Father in the Lord’s Prayer. How important it is to ask God the Father’s kingdom to come. What does it mean? What is the kingdom of God? Where is it coming from? Where is it going? Who is the King of this kingdom? Who are the inhabitants of this kingdom?

Before I elaborate on this, let me try to put words like “king” or “kingdom” in perspective. I am not sure if words like “king” or “kingdom” have the same weight as they used to do in the 1st Century. Kings had complete authority; they were sovereign. Kings and Emperors were considered equal to gods. So what word can replace this word at this day and age? I don't think we can find one equivalent word that is relevant today, but we will try with several to represent the word King: CEO, Boss, President, Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief, a person who is in charge of something or somewhere who has absolute authority.

A. The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament

Darrel Johnson describes the Jewish understanding of the Kingdom of God. He says: "In using the term 'kingdom of God,' the Hebrew writers of Scripture were not thinking of a place over which God would rule, nor even of an identifiable people over whom God would rule. Rather, 'kingdom of God' or 'kingdom of heaven' is a way of saying 'God is acting as King.'"¹

Yes, God is acting as king. God is sovereign and is in charge. The Prophets longed that one day the finally God will establish his rule over the entire world by God's messiah; this day will be called the **Day of the Lord**.

So Jesus is praying to His father asking and asking to make the kingdom present in fullness. Come and rule over this world, on earth as it is in heaven.

B. Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven

The phrase "kingdom of God" occurs 68 times in 10 different New Testament books, while "kingdom of heaven" occurs only 32 times, and only in the Gospel of Matthew. Both mean the same thing. It is much more than space or location.

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:23-24 ESV)

C. Metaphors describing the Kingdom of God

Jesus gave examples describing the kingdom of God with parables.

- Seed:

"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. (Mark 4:26-27 ESV)

- Mustard seed:

"With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed... (Mark 4:30)

- Yeast:

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven (yeast) that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:13 ESV)

In another parable, Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is like yeast. Our ladies prepare the *cheoreg* dough and sleep. They do not sit and watch it all night. They wake up to find it ready to be baked.

Seed, mustard seed, yeast– all of them are small things. The point is, God will do His work and you will not even know how. ***It is His work and not ours.***

Meanwhile, the farmer will work hard during the day. He will be “busy” plowing the soil and then scattering and sowing the seed. **Then he will go to sleep.**

He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how...

The growth process has happened while the man went to sleep. **This means he is not responsible for the growth.** In fact, it is a mystery for him, says the Bible (“He knows not how”). So there is a distance between the growth and the man. The man is not in control of the growth of the seed. There is a mystery here; he wonders and stands in awe.

D. Is God’s kingdom here or is it yet to come?

Let us examine the life of Jesus. He had compassion for the people. Everywhere he went he preached, healed, loved and said the kingdom of God was very close. **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matthew 4:17 ESV)

In another verse, he said: **“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”** (Matthew 12:28 ESV)

Yet he says in this prayer: **“Your kingdom come.”** If the kingdom is already here, or at hand, why did he pray asking for the kingdom to come?

Theologians argue about this. Some stress the kingdom is here, while others stress the kingdom is in the future. The Bible stresses both of them.

The answer is both: “The kingdom is here; it is yet to come.”

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.” (Mark 1:15 ESV)

Jesus said this in the beginning of his ministry. The word “time” that has been used in Greek is *kairos* and not *kronos*. *Kairos* is quality time; “It is ‘opportunity time.’ *Kairos* time is that unique moment determined by God for the fulfillment of his divine purposes.”² Jesus is declaring that by his presence, God’s Kingdom is here within us. Jesus gave sight to the blind, healed the lame; the lepers came desperately and Jesus touched them and healed them. Jesus became the Lamb of God and was sacrificed for our sins. Jesus is declaring that God’s kingdom is here, right here.

When Sevan and I visited Lebanon we wanted to minister to Syrian refugees. Our missionary friends took us to different places. I saw in the midst of chaos people who love Jesus praying that God’s kingdom would rule over those camps. I saw compassion, I saw love, I saw care. I saw missionaries just holding these kids’ hands and loving them (they didn’t even speak Arabic). The Kingdom of God was right there. At that moment, God was acting right there and transforming lives.

Yet, we wait for the Kingdom to completely come over us. In his teachings, Jesus mentions that the kingdom will come. **“For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”** (Luke 22:18 ESV). So there is this tension: The kingdom is already here and not yet.

Darrell Johnson explains very well:

Take note of the words the New Testament uses for the second coming of Jesus Christ. His return is called the *parousia*, meaning “presence” or “arrival.” His return is also called the *epiphaneia*, meaning “appearing,” and his return is called the “*apocalypse*.” ... The word simply meant “unveiling.” It referred to the pulling back of a curtain, to the lifting of a cover. It means “breaking through from hiddenness.” At the end of this age, on the Day of the Lord, God will unveil before the world what is true right now. On that day God will make visible to all people what is true right now: that the crucified carpenter is on the throne of the universe, that the crucified one is

now King over all kings and queens, even if those kings and queens do not acknowledge the fact or obey him (Phil 2:9; Eph 1:20-23; Heb 1:3; 2:9; Rev 16).³

E. Who can enter this kingdom, who are the citizens?

Let me start with an illustration:

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. (Mark 10:15-16 ESV)

A little 4-year-old girl Ani asked her parents to leave her alone with her new baby sister. The parents worried that Ani might want to hit or shake her, so they hesitated. After some time, they decided to let Ani have her private time with the baby since she was not showing signs of jealousy.

Ani went into the baby’s room and her parents followed her through the opening for the door. She went to the baby and said, ‘Baby, tell me what God feels like. I’m starting to forget.’”

Have you grown older and forgotten God?

We should not be childish, adult babies, always crying for milk. We need to have a childlike faith, awe, reverence to God. Child like faith, who trusts God, depends on God. There is no other way to enter to His Kingdom. No wonder Jesus started this prayer calling his heavenly father, daddy, my daddy, our daddy.

Application:

When we say, “Your kingdom come,” we are saying,

1. “Your kingdom in heaven is perfect. May you transform our hearts so we might become your instruments to transform this imperfect world.”

2. We look forward to the future when Christ will return and wipe away all tears and establish his reign. "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Next week, pray for God's kingdom to come.

- Look around you and see where God is at work here. What evidence can you find of His Kingdom around you?

- Ask God to transform your heart and make you an instrument to bring God's Kingdom around you.

- Ask yourself: Am I ready to meet Christ when He returns to establish His Kingdom?

"Thy Kingdom Come..."

Let me continue with the real life story I started with. That evening, as we were all mourning together in their humble house, God gave me words of encouragement to tell the couple that they would overcome this tragedy. I told them our God is victorious He would turn their sorrow into joy. A year later they had a boy and two years later another one, and the named both of them after the boys they had lost.

"Thy Kingdom Come..."

Amen

1 Darrell Johnson, Fifty-Seven Words that Change the World, P 33

2 ibid p34

2 ibid p 38-39