

Your Kingdom Come

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Date: 15 May 2022

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[0 : 00] Our scripture this morning is in the book of Matthew.

We're all familiar with this. Matthew 6, verse 7 through 13. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 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 and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. As you can see, our title comes from a phrase from the Lord's Prayer.

[1 : 08] Your kingdom come. Amen. You may be seated. I don't know about you, but I've been troubled by a lot of things I've been seeing in the news.

How once noble movements like the Civil Rights Movement have been hijacked by people who rip it off and tear it asunder and muddy the waters.

Because I was just corresponding to another pastor in the PCA about the issue of justice and all that. I said, how in the world can we ever say anything about all these things and rise above the din of the confused rhetoric of those who have hijacked the concept of justice?

Because it's come to the point where, I don't know, if you're in our shoes, Karen and my shoes, you know, we get some very vicious messages from the World Wide Web.

Some call us radical Marxists. Some call us Uncle Toms. And everything but the child of God. But Jesus said, hey, that's normal, isn't it? So I just want to think about, share some thoughts about the kingdom this morning.

[2 : 35] First of all, what is the kingdom of God? Well, we don't have a definition of the kingdom of God. Because we're not infinite like God is.

So all we have are descriptions. We can describe it. The kingdom of God is God's sovereign rule over the lives of individuals, over the affairs of nations, over the course of history.

If you study history with an eye toward the kingdom of God, you can see some things that are happening on the big stage of the world. In our present context, the kingdom of God is a movement of people who live by spiritual, by biblical wisdom.

Where is the kingdom of God? In a general sense, the whole creation is the kingdom of God. But in a special sense, the kingdom of God is where God dwells with his people. When is the kingdom of God?

The Bible teaches us that the kingdom of God is in a perpetual state of unfolding. It's dynamic. It's not static.

[3 : 52] Jesus is the embodiment of the kingdom of God. Up to the time of Jesus, the kingdom of God was supposed to be manifested in the life of Israel. But you know, Israel messed up.

God told Israel that membership in his kingdom was a matter of grace. But Israel insisted that it was a matter of race.

Doesn't that sound familiar? They confused the Canaanites with the nations. They were not supposed to mingle with the Canaanites unless they repented.

But they did. They were supposed to welcome the nations who wanted to worship God. But they didn't. Instead of being a dynamic covenant movement, I mean a dynamic movement of covenant keepers, Israel became an ossified establishment of covenant breakers.

So much so that when the very Son of God came that fulfilled all of their scriptures, they killed him. In the end, instead of being God's open international people, they became a closed Hebrew huddle.

[5 : 17] Now Jesus is establishing a new kind of international kingdom. He had already given his disciples an understanding of the nature of this kingdom in his Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew chapter 5, verses 3 through 10. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In other words, those who recognize their spiritual poverty will have the richness of kingdom consciousness, kingdom orientation, and kingdom grace.

This kingdom consciousness and kingdom grace will lead to kingdom behaviors and kingdom blessings. The rest of the Beatitudes, Jesus gives us several perspectives on kingdom behaviors and blessings.

Verse 4. Those who have the kingdom behavior of mourning over their sinful condition will receive the kingdom blessing of comfort. Verse 5.

Those who have the kingdom behavior of meekness will receive the kingdom blessing of the earth as an inheritance. Verse 6. Those who have the kingdom behavior of craving righteousness will receive the kingdom blessing of ultimate satisfaction.

[6 : 37] Verse 7. Those who have the kingdom behavior of mercy will receive the kingdom blessing of mercy. Those who have the kingdom behavior which stems from a pure heart will receive the kingdom blessing of a vision of God.

Verse 9. Those who have the kingdom behavior of peacemaking will receive the kingdom blessing of being called God's children. That's some incredible stuff.

The apostle Paul gives us another perspective on the kingdom, on kingdom behaviors and blessings. Romans 14, verse 7. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of, you know this, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness. This is a covenantal term. It's a relational term. It means doing right by the other party in the covenant. Amen. And doing right is based on God's character. You got to know something about God before you can do right.

God always does right by us. Therefore, we must what? Do right by him. God has shown you, oh man, what is good. What does the Lord require of you? And you know the rest.

[7 : 54] And we are to do right by God through sincere devotion to him, number one, and empowering justice towards our fellow human beings.

Peace. Peace is a life-giving and life-affirming state of being. Kingdom peace also involves shalom. Shalom. Shalom is not merely tranquility.

Shalom is a state of well-being involving wholeness. That is, the special presence of God. A dwelling place that fits you and where you fit.

It is knowing your purpose and pursuing it. Kingdom peace involves being realistic. It is recognizing that while the books of the present temporary reality are not balanced.

They are not balanced. There's unfairness. There's oppression. There's sin. There's a whole lot of mess going on. The books are not balanced. And number two, recognizing that we cannot balance the books because we only see half of the ledger sheet.

[9 : 22] All we see is the debit side, but we don't see the credit side. The tragedy today is that everybody is trying to balance the books on the debit side, and you can't do it.

It is knowing, this piece is knowing that the books can be balanced by God because he also sees the credit side of the ledger sheet.

Joy in the Holy Spirit. Among others, this joy involves knowing that because God has already balanced the books in eternity, he is guaranteed that the books will be balanced in history.

And when these books are balanced, every injustice will be eradicated. Every inequality will be eliminated. And every wrong will be avenged.

Notice I said avenged. Vengeance is a good thing. But it belongs to God. And he does the best job of vengeance than anybody else.

[10 : 39] Moreover, God has guaranteed that we will be satisfied with his resolution of all these issues. Joy in the Holy Spirit.

Now, the basic requirement of the kingdom is repentance and faith. We know that. Let me give you a different picture of this.

John the Baptist called us to repent for the kingdom of heaven was near. But now, since Jesus has come, the kingdom of heaven is here.

Repentance involves... Now, get this. Picture this now. So, how many of you... Probably all use computers, right? All right. I'm a bit of a geek sometimes. All right. Repentance involves forsaking our old operating system.

Hello. Faith involves upgrading to a whole new operating system. Okay. Now, it is as radical as dumping DOS 1.0 And upgrading to Windows 11.

[11 : 58] Now, don't worry. I'm inclusive now. I'm inclusive. Some of you are Mac users here. Okay. It is as radical as dumping OS 1 and upgrading to Monterey.

All right. We're talking about a new operating system. The kingdom requires an upgrade from a this world temporary orientation to a kingdom eternal orientation.

Don't think historically. Think in terms of eternity. It involves living...

It involves an upgrade from ordinary common grace... Hello. To a kingdom special grace.

God did not design us to live on ordinary common grace. It's a good thing now. Ordinary common grace is all right. But he designed special kingdom grace for us.

[13 : 07] Story is told about a lion who was caged in a zoo. Small cage. Ten foot by ten foot. And he needed to exercise.

And what he would do... He would pace. Have you ever seen animals do this in a zoo? He would pace back and forth. Pace back and forth. That's all he could do. Because he was in a confined space.

He was operating on ordinary grace. So some animal rights activists got involved. They said, oh, it's a shame that we keep this lion pinned like that.

We need to free him. And put him out in the... In the open... The outdoors. So he could run. So they got him out. They put him in the outdoors.

So he could run. And guess what he did? Sound familiar? Yeah. That's where we are in American Christianity.

[14 : 13] If we upgrade to a kingdom operating system... Get this. We will no longer sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the temporary.

Amen. Amen. Peter describes this tragedy of people who lack a kingdom operating system. 2 Peter 3, verses 3 through 10.

First, you must understand that in the last days, scoffers will come. Scoffers following their own evil desires. They will say, where is the coming he promised? For since our fathers died, everything goes on since the beginning of creation.

Verse 5. But they deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. And by these waters also the world at that time was deluged and destroyed.

By the same word, the present heavens and earth are preserved for fire. Fire next time. Right? Being kept for the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men.

[15 : 21] But do not forget this one thing, dear friends. That with the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.

He is patient with you, not willing that any would perish, but everyone would come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire. And the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. This is temporary, saints. Who are these scoffers who lack a kingdom operating system?

Well, they were obviously those who denied biblical truth. I mean, that's pretty obvious. They were obviously those who lived ungodly lives. But scoffers do not have to be so obvious.

We in the Christian community can also be functional scoffers.

[16 : 30] We in the Reformed community can also be functional scoffers. Well, we become functional scoffers when we sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the temporary.

How many Christians do you know are governed by political ideology? I'm a conservative. I'm a liberal. I started to say something, but I'll just say, forget that.

Those titles are not worthy of children of God. I'm a Democrat.

I'm a Republican. You know, sometimes we can agree with one or the other. But it doesn't mean that we are that.

Does that make sense? That's right. That's right. Well, that's sacrificing the permanent on the altar of the temporary when we identify ourselves in this way.

[17 : 44] When we allow the present partial reality to blind us to the invisible, fuller reality of God's kingdom, it happens. It happens when we forget that God is infinite and unlimited.

You see, what you've got to understand is that if you put any limitations on God, if you think that God is limited in any way, then the G-O-D you worship is nothing more than a cheap idol.

You say, oh, God can't do that. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Whatever you call God, that's an idol. What does God tell Jeremiah?

I am the God of all mankind. Is there anything too hard for me? With a finite God, our faith becomes shaped by today's ideologies more than the word of God.

For example, we forget when we have a, when we worship an idol, this is American Christianity, when we worship an idol that we call G-O-D, then to forget the distinction between American identity and Christian identity.

[18 : 55] That's right. That's right. How many times have you seen that? I've identified this in the seminar I did here a few months ago as Christian nationalism.

That's an abomination. With a finite God, that's where we end up. The only way to successfully fight idolatry, the idolatry of Christian nationalism, is through the word of God.

Biblical wisdom. Biblical wisdom. Biblical wisdom. But many who call themselves Christians have tried to fight Christian nationalism, Christian nationalism idolatry through anti-God ideologies.

They buy into this and they buy into that. Today we do this, those who do this today are often shaped by critical theory, by critical race theory.

And when we shape our Christianity by those ideologies, then we end up with critical Christendom, which is just as bad as Christian nationalism.

[20 : 15] And by the way, there's a crossfire going on between these two groups. And guess who gets the bullets? It's the body of Christ.

When this happens, we become preoccupied with the naive utopian pipe dreams and ignore the realistic wisdom of God.

We become cynical about God's faithfulness. We become consumed by anxiety and worry. If this continues, we will become apathetic about the Lord's life of Christ.

And we will eventually twist the scriptures to prop up our self-deception. And in the end, for some of us, our Christianity will become dysfunctional because it is rooted in idolatry.

For others of us, our Christianity will become scandalized because it is rooted in anti-God ideology. And for all of us, our Christianity will become locked up like a crashing computer.

[21 : 26] Have you ever experienced that? You've got this big document up there. You get made of the saving and it locks up. It freezes. And all you can do is a cold boot.

And when you do that, you lose all the stuff that you put in. That's the condition of much of the American church today. Peter refutes the scoffers who are locked up on this world operating system.

His first argument is in verse 7. They willingly forget that God's word is the reality behind everything we consider real. The heavens and earth came by God's word.

The old order was destroyed by God's word by means of water. You can imagine the skeptics. How can tons of water come out of the sky? The present world order is being preserved by God's word.

The present world order is upheld by God's word and will be destroyed by God's word by means of fire. All this is temporary. His second argument.

[22 : 30] They ignore God's perspective on time. Days are like a thousand years. A thousand years is like a day. His third argument. Verse 9. God's delay is an expression of his grace and patience.

Not of his inability or indifference. What if God decided to end the world just one second before you got saved?

You say, well, that's not fair. Right? I'm glad God waited on me. Fourth argument. The day of the Lord will come suddenly, like a thief, when we least expect it.

You've heard me say this before. I know the exact day that Jesus is coming back. The exact moment when we least expect it. Okay. The present space-time continuum will disappear with a roar.

Revelation 6.14. The sky will recede like a scroll rolling up. Now, we're not talking about the clouds rolling up. We're talking about the very fabric of space and time.

[23 : 36] It will split. And the kingdom will come in its full glory. Revelation 20. Verse 11.

The earth and the sky will flee from Christ's presence. And there will be no place for them. The elements will be burned up. The earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Earthquakes should remind us of that. That solid earth is not really solid. Now, I've never been through an earthquake. I'm scared to death of one. But some of you have.

And you know what that's like. 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 11 through 15. He talks about the limitations.

The implications, rather, of a kingdom orientation. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought we to be? We ought to be holy. We ought to live holy and godly lives.

[24 : 40] As you look forward to the day and speed God's coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire. The elements will melt in the heat.

But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven, a new earth, the home of the righteous. So then, my dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless and blameless and at peace with him.

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation. So, Peter tells us, in light of the kingdom, in light of the temporary nature of this world system, what kind of people are we to be?

We ought to be a kingdom people. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. People who live by special kingdom grace. Amen. Amen.

Since the resolution of all issues is guaranteed in the coming permanent kingdom, then we ought to live on that basis in the present temporary world order. According to Peter, being a kingdom people involves being holy.

[25 : 53] What are we talking about? Avoiding evil. Devoted to God. Committed to doing things God's way. In other words, we ought to make every effort to be found spotless and blameless and at peace with God.

I fear God. And because I fear God, I don't fear human beings. But if I didn't fear God, I'd be scared to death of human beings. Just because we're in the church does not necessarily mean that we are always at peace with God.

That we all automatically have a kingdom consciousness. You know, you think God said some rough stuff about the church earlier in the scripture.

Revelation chapter 2 verse 16. Jesus warns the functional scoffers in the church of Pergamum. He says this. Repent therefore.

Otherwise, I will come to you and I will fight against them with a sword of my mouth. Whoa. Remember. Remember.

[27 : 07] All the times God came against the Old Testament church, namely Israel, because of their apathy. If we truly have a kingdom consciousness, then we will keep in mind two things.

One. First. The longevity of the present evil order does not mean that it is permanent. Second. Second.

That God's patience with the present evil world order means the opportunity of salvation for the lost. The opportunity of greater service for the saved.

Because the kingdom of God is permanent, it is invincible. Jesus told Pilate, my kingdom is not of this world system.

And the implication of that is more powerful than it. Jesus told Peter, the gates of hell shall not overcome God's kingdom.

[28 : 11] The power of the kingdom movement will be unstoppable by the power of the enemy.

In Revelation 11, 15, the triumphant people of God look back at history and joyfully declare, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

Well, let's kind of put this all together. What is the kingdom? It is not just a place. It is not an institution.

It is not an establishment. It is not politics. It is not ideology. The kingdom is the intrusion of eternity itself.

Amen. We live in an exciting time in history. It is after the outbreak of the permanent kingdom of God embodied in Jesus. And it is before the end of the temporary kingdoms of this world system.

[29 : 18] So we're in two things. It's the end of the temporary, early in the stage of the permanent. Where are you going to live?

Don't be like Esau, who sold his birthright for a lousy bowl of granola.

That's sacrificing the permanent on the altar of the temporary. What kind of grace are we going to live by? Ordinary common grace or special kingdom grace?

Or I'll break it down in some other analogy. Is it going to be regular leaded grace? Or super unleaded grace? The world is looking for a people who are running on super unleaded grace.

Unfortunately, we who claim to be the kingdom people often are running on regular leaded grace. And yet we pretend that we're running on super unleaded grace. Hello.

[30 : 28] And the world sees us in our present condition and takes note of how we sputter and ping and smoke.

What can be done about this? Well, Jesus said it. First, we must take to heart the encouragement that Jesus gives us. And he says this in this particular context, but I think it applies to us today.

So don't worry, saying, what shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear? For the pagans run after these things, and your heavenly Father already knows that you need them. Today, Jesus is telling us, don't fret about the challenges of the world system.

It's just a paper tire. It's just temporary. He is telling us not to be intimidated by today's ideologies. Christian nationalism.

Christian nationalism. Critical theory. Critical race theory. Intersectionality. Gender fluidity. Etc.

[31 : 42] All these ideologies will crash and burn because they lack biblical wisdom. They cannot produce diversity, for example.

What they produce is fake diversity. You go to our universities, there's diversity in look, but there's not diversity in thought. They confuse ethnicity with sexuality.

Two different things. Right, right, right. I saw a report this morning about a kid who was charged with a crime of sexual harassment.

You know what he was guilty of? Not using the proper pronoun to one of his classmates. The second thing that we must do, we must obey the command of Jesus in Matthew 633.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. In our present context, our concerns involve more than just food and clothes.

[33 : 02] Life was a lot simpler back in those days. Today's growing anti-Christian hostility. Our very reputations are at stake. What do we want our church to be known for?

Come on, you all know the history of New City, some of you. You want us to be known for diversity, racial reconciliation, mercy ministry?

Now don't get me wrong now. Hear me real good. These are all good things. And I'm all for them. You understand what I'm saying? But maybe we have forgotten that the primary reason why the American church falls short in these areas is due to our failure to seek the kingdom of God.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Yeah, racism might have something to do with it. Classism might have something to do with it. But the core issue is our failure to seek and pursue the kingdom of God.

Amen. According to Jesus, we will never fulfill these aspects of ministry by pursuing them.

[34 : 22] You will never get diversity by pursuing diversity. You will never get racial reconciliation by pursuing racial reconciliation. You will never succeed in mercy ministry by pursuing mercy ministry.

Don't get me wrong. These are good things. We can only fulfill these things by pursuing the kingdom of God. Seek first the kingdom and all these things will be added to you as well.

What would you rather have, a wheel to a car or the whole car? Come on. Come on. There is no message as radical and as powerful than the kingdom of God.

That's what Jesus preached, the gospel of the kingdom. So, based on that, I can confidently say, who needs Karl Marx when we have Jesus, the son of the true and living God?

Who needs Max Horkheimer, the father of the true and living God? Who needs Derek Bell, the father of critical race theory, when we have Jesus, the son of the true and living God?

[35 : 42] And who needs Kimberly Crenshaw, the mother of intersectionality, when we have Jesus, the son of the true and living God?

And therefore, what is our obligation today? Jesus said it. Seek first kingdom consciousness.

Seek first kingdom orientation. Seek first kingdom behavior. Seek first kingdom righteousness. And most importantly, seek first God's special kingdom grace, which makes all of this possible.

Seek first kingdom grace, which makes all of this possible.

Seek first kingdom, the son of the king. Your kingdom is not just a set of rules that we follow, but your kingdom is transformative. It changes us.

[37 : 07] Forgive us, Lord, for all the times we've sacrificed a permanent on the altar of the temporary. Forgive us for taking pride in the things that make our church different, without acknowledging the fact that the difference should be the fruit of the pursuit of your kingdom.

We thank you for your grace and we pray that you will guide our steps that we might be your people in a new and dynamic way.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.