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Lord, Teach Us to Pray: Thy Kingdom Come
Matthew 6:10a

This past summer Jenny and I visited Spain for our 30th anniversary, and while we were in Madrid we visited the Royal Palace. Whenever you visit a European palace there is always a royal crown to see, scepter and throne to ogle at and be amazed by. But my favorite room was called the Antechamber of Maria Cristina or the Stradivarius room. (*Spencer Hutchins - I was thinking of you!*) The centerpiece of the room were four instruments crafted for the Spanish court in 1709 by Antonio Stradivarius. It consists of two violins, a viola, and a violincello. Occasionally they bring them out and let some real musicians play them!! For me seeing four Stradivarius instruments in one room was impressive!

But today my focus is not on royal palaces and earthly kingdoms with all their precious treasures, as grand as they seem to us mere mortals. Today we are considering something far greater: God's Kingdom, an everlasting kingdom that exists both now, in human hearts who have received Jesus as their King, but also a future kingdom when Christ will return and set up a new heavens and a new earth.

Last week, Mark preached from the shortest text he had ever used and he promised to preach the shortest sermon he'd ever preached. I'm not sure that was true. My text is three times longer than Marks, so I've worked hard to memorize it. Ready?

"Thy kingdom come"

When Jesus teaches the disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come" what does he mean? Talking about God's Kingdom is like peeling an onion. Every time you peel back a layer you find another. There are many aspects to consider when talking about God's Kingdom. Jesus spoke about it more than any other subject. Thousands if not millions of pages have been written about the Kingdom of God.

But in a nutshell, when Jesus prays "thy kingdom come, He is referring both to God's spiritual reign as King in the lives of individuals and His coming rule over all creation. When you become a Christian, the Spirit of God takes up residence within your heart, and the "kingdom of God is within you" as Jesus says in Luke 17:21. Jesus becomes enthroned as King in your life.

At the same time, when the church prays, "thy kingdom come...." we pray not only for the establishment of God's kingdom now, but also for the final fulfillment of the kingdom of God—when Christ returns in His glory and establishes a new world

order. The apostle John gives us the most explicit vision of the coming kingdom in Revelation 21.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

John opens a tiny portal into how wonderful this kingdom will be. The "New Jerusalem" coming out of heaven is compared to a bride that is beautifully adorned for her husband. Have you ever been to a large wedding?

A few weekends ago Chapel Hill hosted a large wedding and 9 or 10 bridesmaids were fluttering around the narthex area like little Tinkerbellies showing off their beautiful light green flowing dresses. The bride looked radiant in her lovely white gown with a long train. And great joy filled the air as they waited in anticipation for the start of the wedding... so much joy!! You could feel it in the air.

That's a glimpse of God's Kingdom to come: Unspeakable joy, a heightened sense of anticipation having the presence of the King—the Bride, the Church, radiant and pure in the presence of her husband. These are fabulous images as we consider the coming Kingdom of God.

But John goes on to whet our tastes buds even more of this coming kingdom... He describes the longing of every human heart—no more death, no more mourning, no more crying and no more pain. Wars over. Can you imagine a world without war? During most of human history there has been a war going on somewhere on the earth. Dictators deposed—no more Putins, Assads and rogue nations like North Korea to worry about. Petty politics, political bullying, slash and burn campaigning gone with the old order of things... diseases cured, death vanquished.

In their absence, joy unspeakable in the presence of our God who is glorious and loving, full of mercy and grace.

Right now we can only imagine what it will be like for Jesus to return and for the fulfillment of God's kingdom for all eternity. But when Jesus taught the disciples to pray "thy kingdom come" he also taught them to pray that the kingdom would break-in now—not just for the future when the King returns to judge Satan once and for all—but to see powerful glimpses of His future kingdom established here and now on earth.

When Jesus taught his church to pray “thy kingdom come” he taught her to pray for the continual advancement of God’s kingdom on earth—a kingdom that would be marked by a different set of values... an upside down Kingdom clearly set forth in Sermon on the Mount, especially the beatitudes.

The “Be-attitudes” speak of the kind of mindset, lifestyle, and values Jesus envisions someday within His heavenly kingdom. And the fantastic thing is these kingdom values are being lived out all around us. The kingdom of God has come!

Jesus said, ‘Blessed are you who are poor in spirit for yours is the kingdom of heaven.’

I like the Phillips translation of this beatitude: Blessed are you who know your need of God... Humility is such a beautiful characteristic when it’s seen in people. Humility comes when you know your own brokenness and weakness.

I serve in a department where we work with people who recognize their own brokenness and want to do something about it. It’s an inspirational environment because you witness and hear transformational stories about people whose lives have been put back together, where captives are set free, where the brokenhearted are bound up, and where the oppressed find joy.

Jesus also said, “Blessed are you who mourn for you will be comforted.”

Recently there was a memorial service at Chapel Hill for a woman who passed away at the age of 67 from multiple myeloma. She was an extraordinary teacher and principal most of her life in San Diego, but when she and her husband moved back to their native Washington and to Gig Harbor two years ago she discovered that she had an incurable form of cancer.

What was amazing to hear was the activity of the Kingdom of God all around this woman and her husband when they moved to Gig Harbor. Right in their immediate neighborhood were a significant number of Chapel Hill families. Our brothers and sisters in Christ wrapped their loving arms around this family who were in mourning. One day neighbors put on a wedding for the dying woman’s son in their backyard! On many occasions people from the neighborhood and the Cancer Care Support Group took Patty to Seattle for cancer treatments. The kingdom of God broke out throughout this woman’s battle with cancer as God’s people comforted those who were mourning. God’s Kingdom came through Chapel Hill brothers and sisters who were present all the way to the end through hospice and the memorial service... and continues on after the service loving the husband in mourning and who does not yet know Christ.

Jesus also said, “Blessed are you who hunger and thirst for righteousness for you will be satisfied.”

We have a children's department and a youth department that passionately teach and model biblical values to children and youth so that the next generation will understand how to love God and have God-honoring relationships with one another.

And we have a compassionate ministry called The Landing for teens who are grappling with hard life issues. Sometimes teens are struggling because they come from broken homes; sometimes they are struggling because being a teenager in today's world is really hard, especially if a young person chooses to follow Christ. Sometimes they are struggling because they have made some wrong choices and they need a safe place to be loved and accepted, to hear the truth, and to be given biblical counsel in a non-judgmental, compassionate environment.

Jesus also said, "*Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.*"

We have a deacon's ministry that makes meals for people coming out of the hospital who are too ill to make dinner for themselves.

We have a Titus ministry that is ready and waiting to help people in need with their groceries, gas, heating bill and rent – people from both from the church and the community.

We have Christian teachers and administrators working in the public schools who show Christ like love to students and who model healthy behavior and boundaries for children, some whose home lives are in shambles from divorce or drug abuse. The kingdom of God breaking through on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.*"

A Christian doctor in our area had a patient with MS for many years. The disease eventually became so advanced that the woman was bound to a wheelchair. The doctor, who knew his patient over many years, knew of her emotional struggle with her husband's infidelity.

The Kingdom of God broke through. God's gentle peacemaker encouraged his long time patient to forgive her husband, so that she would be set free from her own bitterness. The woman forgave her husband, and through His divine grace, the woman rose up out of her wheelchair and walked again, never returning to a state of paralysis. The Kingdom of God breaking in to set the captives free.

These are just a few stories of how the Kingdom of God has come, now on earth as it is in heaven, in our own community!

So my question to you today is how is God's Kingdom wanting to break out through your own life? How is the Spirit of Jesus nudging you to advance His kingdom through you on earth as it is in heaven?