

Your Kingdom Come

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Date: 07 June 2020

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[0 : 00] A recent article in the Independent Online had the title, The eerie coronavirus slowdown is forcing us all to confront the question, is this it? It was by Johnny Patterson, a human rights activist.

He says, at some point in life, everyone faces moments which knock them off modern life's relentless treadmill. For his family, it was the unexpected death of his dad, but he says COVID-19 is unique because we are sharing a crisis moment together.

He says the eerie slowdown forces us to confront the nagging question, is this it? Now, the coronavirus has been a wake-up call for many.

It's reminded us that we are weak and we're not really in control of our lives. And so we've been forced to deal with the big issues and reflect on the deep questions that we all too easily ignore because we're just too busy in life to stop and think about them.

Now, in church, we've been looking at the Lord's Prayer. It's where Jesus teaches us how to pray. But as he does, he helps us understand the big issues and make sense of the deep questions.

[1 : 11] Because the Lord's Prayer teaches us what God is like. It teaches us what we're like. And it explains our world to us. So Jesus forces us to confront reality and helps us see why he is our world's best hope.

And we see this in the phrase that we're looking at today, your kingdom come. So whether you call yourself a Christian or not, when we grasp what it means to pray, your kingdom come, we can answer the question, is this it?

So let me read from Matthew chapter 6, the Lord's Prayer, reading Matthew chapter 6, verse 9 to 13. And then we'll have a think about this phrase, your kingdom come.

Matthew 6, verse 9. These are the words of Jesus. 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 also have forgiven our debtors.

[2 : 24] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. So that's the Lord's Prayer. Now let's consider what it means to pray, your kingdom come.

We'll ask three questions. What, how, and why? What is God's kingdom? How does God's kingdom come? And why pray for God's kingdom to come?

What is God's kingdom? How does God's kingdom come? Why pray for God's kingdom to come?

First of all, what is God's kingdom? Put simply, God's kingdom basically means God's rule.

So God has always been the king and he will always be the king. So Psalm 47 verse 2 says, For the Lord most high is awesome, the great king over all the earth.

And then Psalm 103 verse 19 says, The Lord has established his throne in heaven. His kingdom rules over all. So God is the king who rules over everything with absolute power and authority.

[3 : 31] And so we best understand God's kingdom in terms of God's rule over all people and all creation. One biblical scholar, Graham Goldsworthy, has defined the kingdom of God as God's people in God's place under God's rule.

God's people in God's place under God's rule. And I think it helpfully captures a key theme of the Bible story because it speaks of God as the king who rules and of people who are ruled and a sphere where his rule is recognized.

And so the storyline of the Bible explains the history of the world and the kingdom of God. So from the creation at the very beginning, God's rule was established.

The Garden of Eden describes the world as God designed it to be, where God's people, Adam and Eve, were to live under God's rule in the perfect world that he had made.

But instead of listening to God, they listened to the serpent, the devil or Satan. And so they were banished from the garden away from God's presence. And their descendants, that's us, have been condemned to live and die outside of God's kingdom ever since.

[4 : 45] This rejection of God's loving rule has had disastrous consequences for humanity and the whole creation. That's why our reality is a world full of suffering and death.

But God, in his great love, has not abandoned humanity. God has a plan to restore his rule on the earth. And we see this woven right through the Bible story as the kingdom of God.

So after the creation and the fall, God promised that he would crush the serpent, the devil, and bring his people back to the garden.

And this would happen through his people, Israel. They would bring his blessing to all the nations of the earth because from them, a promised king, a Messiah, would come to establish a kingdom forever.

And so in time, Jesus came to fulfill God's promises and to restore God's reign. That's why he began his public ministry with the staggering words.

[5 : 47] The time has come, he said. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. So the breaking in of God's kingdom was seen in Jesus.

In his teaching, in his miracles, through his death and resurrection, God's promised salvation had arrived in Jesus. So in one sense, the kingdom of God has come in Jesus Christ.

And all those who submit to Jesus as king can enter in. But against God's kingdom stands the kingdom of this world, ruled by Satan, the devil.

And it's a kingdom actively opposed to God and his rule. And we see the effects of this kingdom in all the evil and suffering and pain in our world. It's a consequence of our rejection of God's loving rule.

And so right now, there is a clash of kingdoms and it will rage on until Jesus returns and God's kingdom comes in all its fullness. I wonder if you've ever seen one of those extreme home makeover shows on TV when a run-down house is restored into a fantastic home.

[7 : 01] So the family are sent away on holiday and a team of designers and builders spare no expense in creating for them a perfect home. And then when the family return, they're just overcome with emotion at the sight of their mansion.

Their ruined home has been replaced with a new and better one. And so when it comes to God's kingdom, the extreme makeover has started in Jesus and his death and resurrection.

And so we wait for the ruined creation to be restored to a beautiful new creation. And that's where history is heading. So that's the first question, what is God's kingdom?

Second question, how does God's kingdom come? So right now we are living between the inauguration of the kingdom and the consummation of the kingdom.

So the kingdom is here already but not yet. In other words, it has arrived in Jesus and it will be completed when Jesus comes again. And so Jesus, the promised Messiah, didn't bring the kingdom through force.

[8 : 10] Instead, he let his enemies kill him as a common criminal. So God's kingdom came through the suffering and death of Jesus. Because when Jesus died and rose again, he made it possible for us to be welcomed back into God's kingdom.

his sacrifice on the cross liberates us from our captivity to Satan, the ruler of the kingdom of this world. Because when Jesus died, he defeated Satan, sin and death.

And then he rose victorious, assuring us that the kingdom will one day come in its full glory. And so the decisive battle has already been won and the clash of kingdoms was taking place at the cross. but we wait for the victory celebration and it will happen when Jesus returns. And so with the coming, the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, the whole creation has turned the corner from darkness to light.

The darkness still exists, of course, but the light will one day dispel all the darkness forever. So the kingdom has arrived with Jesus but it will come in all its fullness when he returns.

[9 : 27] Which means right now we are living between times. There's a great illustration that's often used to help make sense of the kingdom of God being here already but not yet.

It's a World War II illustration and it comes from the way the war ended. Because for all intents and purposes, World War II was over on D-Day when the Allied troops established a beachhead in Normandy, France.

That sealed the fate of the Germans and they knew it. But it wasn't until V-E Day, victory in Europe, in 1945 that the war was finally over.

That's when the German army eventually surrendered. Because between D-Day and V-E Day came the Battle of the Bulge, a desperate counter-attack by the German army.

And so for six weeks the battle raged back and forth and many lives were lost. And so when it comes to the kingdom of God, Jesus' death and resurrection are like D-Day when he struck a death blow to the enemies of Satan, sin and death.

[10 : 33] That's when the war was won. But we still haven't reached the final victory day. And so the battle rages on and God's enemies continue their destructive fight, hopeless as it is.

So the kingdom of God is here and victory is assured but the conflict continues as we wait for Jesus to return and bring the kingdom in all its fullness.

That's why we're in between the already and not yet of the kingdom of God. And so the big issue is whether we belong to this kingdom. Because we can't pray your kingdom come and mean it if we haven't yet bowed the knee to Jesus as our king.

Only those who acknowledge Jesus as king can become members of the kingdom of God. Because when we pray your kingdom come we're asking that God would rule over us.

That he would take charge of our hearts and run our lives. How do we do this? Well we welcome his rule by repenting of our sins and believing in Jesus. Then we'll seek to be loyal citizens of God's kingdom by submitting ourselves to the values of the kingdom we now belong to.

[11 : 48] But if we reject God's rightful rule over us then we're guilty of high treason. A crime that we will pay for eventually because when Jesus returns as universal king he'll judge everyone.

Jesus makes this clear in one of his kingdom parables about his second coming in Matthew chapter 25. Jesus will invite his people to receive the reward he has prepared for them.

So Matthew 25 verse 34 says then the king will say to those on his right come you who are blessed by my father take your inheritance the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

But those who have turned away from God in this life and refused to acknowledge Jesus as king in the end Jesus will turn them away from him and his words are sobering.

Matthew 25 verse 41 then he will say to those on his left depart from me you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

[12 : 53] So that's how God's kingdom will come. That's when God's reign will extend unchallenged throughout a renewed creation and so we've got this life to decide where our allegiance lies.

Are we with the king? Are we living for his kingdom and longing for his kingdom to come? Or are we going to continue to live our life rejecting the king?

So first point what is God's kingdom? Second point how does God's kingdom come? Third why pray for God's kingdom to come? The reason we pray your kingdom come is because we want God's kingdom to come and it is not yet here in all its fullness and so we're praying that God's reign may be extended in his people and we're praying that God's reign may be extended in his creation.

So let's think first of all of God's reign being extended in his people. Your kingdom come is a missionary prayer. It's a prayer for the advance of God's kingdom in this world because when we belong to God's kingdom we want others to be a part of it too and so we're praying for the good news of Jesus to spread throughout the entire world.

We're praying for sinful rebels like us to be saved because ever since the rejection of God's rule in the Garden of Eden our human hearts have turned away from God's rightful rule over our lives and so praying your kingdom come is pleading with God for more and more people to become his royal subjects because we want men and women and boys and girls to submit to Jesus.

[14 : 37] We want Jesus to conquer more hearts and rule more lives. It's the ultimate acquisition. We want people to come under new and better management.

So this prayer should fill us with love for those who are still outside God's kingdom and burden us with a sense of urgency to do what we can to help them enter in because we can't pray your kingdom come and not attempt to be part of the answer to our prayer.

And so we pray for ministers and missionaries and evangelists to proclaim the good news of Jesus so that people would come to believe it. And we pray for new churches to be planted so that more people can be reached with the good news of Jesus and come to believe it.

Praying your kingdom come means we don't just want it in our lives but we want it in our families amongst our friends in our communities in our city in our nation and across the world because it is only as God reigns in people's hearts that communities and cities and nations will ever be changed. It's awesome and humbling to think that God advances his kingdom through the prayers of his people. So in praying your kingdom come we are praying that God's reign may be extended in his people.

[16:02] But we're also praying that God's reign may be extended in his creation. And so we're praying for the disastrous consequences of the rejection of God's rule in the Garden of Eden to be reversed.

We're asking for God's extreme makeover of creation to come soon. Praying your kingdom come is asking God to send back Jesus and end this world as we know it and bring about his new creation. Because the return of the king and the coming of the kingdom go together. And so we are acknowledging that right now we don't have the world we all want.

We have a world full of pain, disease, suffering, hatred, injustice, racism, greed, poverty, death. But praying your kingdom come reflects our desire for all evil to be banished forever.

And so we should protest at all the injustice in our world. But Jesus calls us to pray because there is only so much we as human beings can do.

[17:12] And yet the tremendous hope of Christianity is that the kingdom is coming. And when it does everything will be sorted out. And so as we look around at our world today we realise that this just can't come quickly enough.

We long for the coronavirus pandemic to end. We can't cope with all the death and the disruption. And we hate racism in hearts and rioting in streets.

It's a painful reminder that as humans we are weak and we are wicked and we need help. Some might be in denial of course thinking that we can somehow solve the problems ourselves.

And some might be in despair just asking is this it? But it should be obvious that we are not the answer to the world's biggest problems.

It's only as we grasp what it means to pray your kingdom come that we find a solution. and the solution has already arrived in Jesus Christ.

[18:13] So Jesus is not some kind of irrelevant figure from history. When we understand what he achieved through his death and resurrection we discover that Jesus is the best hope for our modern world.

The good news of Jesus is that he came to die in order to reconcile people from every nation, tribe, people and language in order to welcome us into the kingdom of God.

And so we can look forward to a multinational, multiracial, multicultural kingdom where peace and justice reign all under the loving rule of God.

It will be a place of diversity and equality and it will be a time of freedom and joy and it's coming. And when it does, justice will be done and it will be seen to be done.

When it comes, there will be true and lasting peace on the streets. So praying, your kingdom come, is longing for justice to roll on like a river and righteousness like a never failing stream.

[19:18] Listen to the description in the book of Revelation at the end of the Bible, Revelation 21 verse 3 and 4. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, look, God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell 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.

Yes, the old order will pass away to make way for the magnificent and glorious completion of the kingdom of God.

And so let's keep praying, your kingdom come and let's invest our lives in God's kingdom until the time that it does come. When the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah and he will reign forever and ever.

Only Jesus Christ can meet our deepest needs in life. Only Jesus can satisfy our deepest longings for this world.

[20:38] And so we can do no better than to beg God with all our heart, your kingdom come. Or express it in the words of the final prayer in the Bible, come Lord Jesus.

Jesus. Let's pray. Our loving God, we thank you that you care for us, you care for this world.

We thank you that this is your world, you are the ruler, and yet this world is broken and spoiled because of human sin and rebellion against you.
And so how we long for your kingdom to come when our broken lives will be restored fully and when this broken world will be turned into what it should be.
We pray your kingdom come. Come, Lord Jesus. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[21 : 43] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.