

## ***“Pray Like This: Your Kingdom Come”***

*Matthew 6:25-33*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • May 31, 2015

This morning we continue our series on the Lord's Prayer which Jesus gave us really as a pattern for our own prayers. Two weeks ago we talked about what it means to address our prayer to "Our Father in Heaven." Last week Brian talked about what it means to keep the name of God holy. Now today we want to look at the prayer for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Last month a man named Vit Jedlicka, a Czech politician, started his own country. The wars and disputes in Eastern Europe left a tiny 2.7 square mile patch of land along the Danube River basically unclaimed. So Jedlicka claimed it for the new nation of Liberland. Shortly after that, Jedlicka was unanimously elected president and began the work of creating a new nation that will be built on the founding principle of voluntary taxes.

The first order of business for this new nation is to find citizens. People were encouraged to apply for citizenship on their national website and within a couple of days nearly 250,000 people had applied. This is not the first time something like this has happened. Last year a man from Virginia traveled to North Africa to stake a claim on a tiny piece of uninhabited desert on the border between Egypt and Sudan, naming it the Kingdom of North Sudan. You may be able to guess who the first king is.

There's something inside each one of us that wants our own kingdom. We don't usually use that language, at least not out loud. But we want to be in charge. We don't want anyone else telling us what to do. We want to be our own boss. We want to be in control. We want to be king.

Actually, there's some validity to the idea of our own kingdom. There are two ways to understand a kingdom. The first is geographical. The various kingdoms of the world are particular places on the map. They defined borders. But another way to understand

a kingdom is that it's where the king reigns. It's where what the king says goes, where he is sovereign. The Christian philosopher Dallas Willard said that a kingdom. It's defined as the range of our effective will. In other words, my kingdom is that area where what I say goes. My kingdom is not very large.

John Ortberg picks up this idea of our kingdoms and says that our individual kingdoms network with other peoples kingdoms in families and schools, churches and communities, corporations and nations. All these kingdoms together form what we could call the kingdom of the world. How would you say things are going in this kingdom? Who does it look like is in charge in this kingdom? The real problem is that each of our kingdoms is messed up by sin. We end up violating each other's kingdom. And so what we secretly want is to get out. We pray what Ortberg calls the Star Trek prayer. If you're familiar with Star Trek you know that every time they got into trouble they would pray to Scottie, "Beam me up." We do the same thing. When we get into trouble we pray, God get me out of here. Where do you find support for that in the Bible? You don't. Nowhere in the Bible does God say he will get us out of here. Jesus had a different plan.

If I were to ask you, "what is the good news, the gospel, that Jesus preached?" what would you say? In other words, what is the message that Jesus preached most often? You might say it was love or forgiveness. Some people would say he preached tolerance or compassion. Those were all part of his message but his primary message was this: the Kingdom of God has arrived. Mark 1:14 and 15 tells us that after spending forty days in the wilderness being tempted by Satan, "Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." In Acts 1:5, just before Jesus ascends to heaven, we

read, "He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

Over and over again Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the same thing. So it's no surprise that when Jesus wanted to teach us how to pray he says, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." I think that if we truly understood what we were asking we might be afraid to actually pray that prayer. You are asking that God's power be unleashed in your life and in your church and community and in the world. You are asking that your own life would be the place where what God says goes. For God's Kingdom to come means that his will is done.

There are many people today who would say that it's impossible for us to know what God's will is, and in one sense they're right. We cannot know everything that God wills to happen. But we can know some of his will because he has revealed it to us. The Bible is God's revealed will and in it we find lots of guidance about things God wants us to do and things he wants us NOT to do. More importantly, we find the words and life of Jesus, who is God's perfectly revealed will. We know God's will for our lives because he came here in person to tell us and show us. Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly."

We can't earn that life. It's a gift. It's grace. We can't grasp the kingdom of God. Instead, the kingdom breaks into our world and pulls us in. But once we're in God makes us agents of his kingdom to help others come in. That means you have a job to do. In this morning's passage, which comes right after Jesus gives them the Lord's Prayer, Jesus basically says, "don't waste your life by focusing on material things. God knows what you need and he's going to supply it. Instead, seek first the kingdom of God and you will have all you need."

I fall into that trap often. I get caught up in worrying about having enough money or

clothes, or here at the church worrying about air conditioning or trees that I forget to seek first the kingdom of God. Maybe you do the same thing. In response to our fears Jesus says try this: pray, "God make up there come down here. Let your kingdom break into this dark world by breaking into *my* life." I really think the literal translation from the Greek is appropriate. What Jesus said to pray is, "May the kingdom of You come to pass on earth just like it is in heaven." The Kingdom of *you*. That reminds me that it's not about the kingdom of *me*. As the John the Baptist said in John 3, "He must increase but I must decrease."

So how exactly to we go about living in the Kingdom of heaven instead of the Kingdom of me? I think there are five ways, and they will sound familiar. First, the primary activity in heaven that we find in the Bible is worship. When we worship we are closest we can get to heaven on earth. Second, we connect with other believers. The church is called the Body of Christ. When we are with other believers we are with other citizens of our real home. Third, when we are growing in our faith through reading and studying the Bible we are training for life in the kingdom of God. Fourth, we go out and take the light of God's kingdom into a dark world when we minister to those who are hurting. As Jesus preached about the Kingdom of Heaven he healed broken people. He reconciled people. He ate and drank with tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners. Jesus tells us that whenever we do the same to the least of these around us we do it for him. Serving other people does not benefit the kingdom of me. I do it solely for the Kingdom of Christ.

Finally, since Jesus' message is that the Kingdom of God is now available to everyone, we have the privilege and the responsibility to invite people into a relationship with Christ. The best way to invite them is to love them unconditionally, to model living in the Kingdom by trusting God's promise to provide for your needs, and to invite them to share life with you. As I said, it's a dangerous prayer but what joy comes from this kind of life. Will you join me?