

# Thy Kingdom Come

Matthew 6.5-15

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Last week in Dutch parliament a few politicians were having verbal fights with each other and one shouted at the other, 'If you cannot accept the values of this land, just go, leave!' You understand of course, given the times we live in, that this shouting was aimed at a muslim.

But what about us, Christians?

As Christians we can never fully accept the values of the countries we live in. We have a different King, we belong to a different Kingdom, and so it is a an illusion to think that as a Church and as Christians, we will ever be embraced by our secular societies.

Jesus taught us to pray 'Your Kingdom Come'. Our Father in heaven, we pray that 'Your Kingdom come'.

The Lord's Prayer is intended to be prayed literally, but not mechanically. It is not a mantra, that we just repeat lots of times for impact.

I mean, we pray the exact words as Jesus told us, but we are supposed to do it with our heart and with our mind. So what did Jesus mean when he told us to pray that "Your Kingdom come"? If we know what he meant, we can better pray it with our whole heart.

First I will pay some attention to the word 'Your', then to the meaning of this 'Kingdom', and finally to what it means that we ask it to 'Come'. Three words, three points, very convenient for the preacher.

## 1. YOUR Kingdom

First, we desire for the Kingdom that belongs to God. We pray for Your Kingdom to come. That is, the Kingdom of Our Father who is in heaven.

This emphasis is important, because there is also another kingdom, the kingdom of this world. The kingdom where people want to make their own name great, build



their own kingdom, do their own will. Where self-giving love, the Love of God, is scorned, and the love for yourself is praised. Just do what is good for yourself, that is the theme of the sermons in that kingdom.

This is the kingdom where idolatry is the rule. Especially the idolatry of self. Of me. My own group. The Kingdom where I can do as I like and where I get what I want. Those are the values of this kingdom. Help yourself, as long as you do not bother others.

But it is God's kingdom we desire, not our own kingdom, not the kingdom of this world.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...

Satan offered all kingdoms of the world to our Lord Jesus Christ, if only He was prepared to not focus on the Kingdom of his Father, but to worship the powers in this worldly Empire.

The choice for Jesus was between either being prepared to participate in the powerplay of this world and accepting evil, or obeying his Father and allowing evil to crucify Him.

We know of the early church that in times of persecution, they were often asked to burn some incense for a statue of the Roman Emperor as if he were divine.

'Just recognise the Emperor, the State, the kingdom we live in, as the ultimate criterion for your behaviour, and you will be fine.' This was the message of the Roman administrators.

When we pray, 'Your Kingdom come', we express our choice for the Kingdom of God above all kingdoms. "Your kingdom we desire, and no one else's!"

The Netherlands, England, The United States, they are not the Kingdom of God. Even if we love our societies and our countries, we must always keep some mental distance. We do not sacrifice our soul to our country. That sacrifice is for God our Father only.

We pray for another Kingdom to come, the Kingdom that belongs to God. And when we do this as Jesus teaches us to do, it is each time impressed on us: we belong to another world, another Kingdom, and nothing, no-one, can have our ultimate loyalty except God our King.

In the early church, the Lord's Prayer was supposed to be prayed three times daily by the believers. You can read this in an old document called the Didache. Pray it three times a day, this was in line with the three prayer times in the Jewish temple.

In the midst of a society that stands up against God, we are reminded morning, afternoon and evening: our life should be about the Kingdom of God and nothing else. All other things are of lesser importance. Only God deserves our loyalty.

## 2. The KINGDOM of God

But what do we actually mean with that word 'Kingdom'?

At the time Jesus gave these instructions on how to pray, the Jews were living under the oppressive rule of the Romans, who were merely the latest in a long line of nations that had ruled Israel since the fall of Judah to the Babylonians.

The Israelites were anxiously awaiting God's deliverance from the Romans, to have their land, which they equated with God's Kingdom, given back to them. They prayed in their most popular standard prayer, the Kaddish,

May God establish his kingdom in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of all the house of Israel, even speedily and at a near time.

So it was easy for Jews who heard Jesus teach how to pray, to think that 'Your Kingdom come' simply meant: May Israel, the nation, be strong again, independent. They were mistaken in this national focus; God's Kingdom is for all people, for the world.



For Israel, this dream of the Kingdom and the restoration of Israel was always connected with the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. Historically the Jews envisioned the coming of the Kingdom to be synonymous with the coming of that person. "When He comes, He will make all things well."

So the prayer for God's Kingdom to come, meant for Jews the same as the prayer for the Messiah to come. In this, they were right. Because the Kingdom is above all things, the rule of the King.

That is why Jesus, who is that Christ, could speak of the Kingdom as already present, even before all things in this world have been made well. 'The Kingdom of God', He said, 'is in the midst of you.' (Lk 17.21). Yes indeed, because Jesus was in their midst.

The Kingdom of God of God was present in their midst, because Jesus Christ was there and He was at work. And He is our King of kings. And as the Church obeys the King, it is part of His Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is about Jesus Christ. He is the King. And as the King, He teaches how, we citizens, have to behave in that Kingdom. He gave us, for instance in the Sermon on the Mount, the constitution of the Kingdom of God.

He also showed by his own life and deeds how people should live in the Kingdom of God. The King himself is our primary example.

By his life, death and resurrection He created wide access for all of us into that Kingdom of God.

And He showed that power in the Kingdom of God is not found in the usage of weapons or force. In His Kingdom, love and serving others is the norm.

That Kingdom, so different from the world we live in, will one day overwhelm the whole earth. When Jesus returns and love and justice shall fill the earth, not just Israel, but all the earth.

How to then summarise what we mean with the term Kingdom of God? I think we might say, it is the spiritual realm where Jesus Christ is present and where people obey His rule.

### 3. Your Kingdom COME

So what do we mean when we pray: ‘Thy Kingdom come’?

Let me quote to you what church father Origen said, when he preached on this verse ‘Your Kingdom come’:

One who prays for the coming of the Kingdom of God rightly prays that the kingdom of God might be established *in himself*, that it might bear fruit and be perfected *in himself*. [...] The Father is present to such a one, and Christ reigns with the Father *in the soul that is maturing*. Origen, On Prayer 25.1

This is certainly an important aspect of the coming of the Kingdom, that each of us dedicates his or her life to God. That each of us seeks the Kingdom of God in his life.

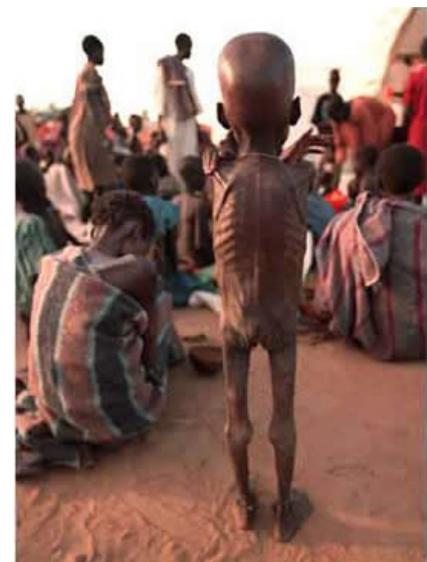
Am I doing that, truly? And you, are you serving the King?

When we talk about the coming of the Kingdom of God, it is urgent that we are sure that we are on the inside of the borders of that spiritual Kingdom, and that we live by its rules. That we, all of us, are good servants of the King, in a good personal relationship to the King.

But the prayer of Jesus goes far beyond us personally. Together with us, Jesus prays for the coming of the Kingdom of God. This means, for something that is not with us yet. The real focus is, I believe, on the coming of the Kingdom of God in its fullness. Jesus prays with us for the renewal of our whole world.

Christ is teaching his people, his church, to pray for the coming of the new heavens and the new earth, for the end of this era and for the beginning of a new era, in other words, for the Second Coming of Jesus. That is, we pray the return of the King. Where the King is, there is the Kingdom.

The Lord’s Prayer is fundamentally misunderstood when we do not hear in it, the eager expectation of the end of this world and the coming of the next. ‘Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!’



By today being followers of Jesus Christ and children of God, we are today already participants in that coming Kingdom of God; we are already citizens of the world that is coming. Because we are subjects of the King.

You are already a citizen in the new world that already exists in the mind of God, and it's coming. With Jesus we pray that it may soon become a reality in this world.

God's Kingdom will come. Not because we are are such good people. But because with Jesus as our prayer leader we pray for God to come and change our world. And if we pray the prayer together with Jesus, we can be sure that God will answer.

## Conclusion

'Your Kingdom come; Lord Jesus Christ, we wait for your return to make this world truly good again.'

And one immediate result of this prayer and of this expectation, is that we, today, also live as citizens of that coming Kingdom. We are citizens of that future Kingdom, but we must, already today, live as good citizens.

How should we live today? We know that in the Kingdom that comes, there is no longer any sadness, disease, sin, hatred, hunger.

Today we feed the hungry, because we know that God wants to do away with all hunger.

Today we heal the sick, because God wants to do away with all sickness.

Today we love God and one another, because we know that this is behaviour that is part of that coming Kingdom; it is behaviour that belongs to the King of that Kingdom.

By doing this, by our love for and service to people, we show what God's Kingdom is like; or rather, we give expression to what Christ our KING and God our Father is like.

He will one day rule, very tangible, very visible, over all the earth. But today we already live under his authority, and with eager expectation for what is to come we pray, 'Come Lord Jesus, renew us, renew your world.'

**+Amen**

