

Sermon

Dan Neary

The World's Greatest Prayer: Your Kingdom Come...

Second in our series of seven sermons from what we're calling *The World's Greatest Prayer...* or more commonly known as *The Lord's Prayer*.

John got us off to a great start last Sunday. These seven sermons will take us up to the *Lenten* season. We are working on a couple of special plans for the weeks following Ash Wednesday that lead up to *Resurrection Sunday* (Easter):

- Sermon Series
- Blog
- Bring a Friend

Last week, John started our series from the passage in Luke 11.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

²He said to them, "When you pray, say:

“ ‘Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.

³Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.’ ”¹

Regardless of our church background, that likely sounds *pretty* familiar to us... but may seem a bit *off*. Some of that *unfamiliarity* may be due to the translation (I've been using Today's New International Version (TNIV)), but, more likely, it is because we are generally most familiar with the version found in the Gospel of Matthew (the "Our Father" as it is referenced by some Church traditions).



¹ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Lk 11:1-4.

Matthew 6:9-13 contains the version that we more commonly pray. I've put this prayer, in the traditional King James Version, on the screen. Can we pray it together this morning?



Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. ²

There is no cause for alarm that these passages do not precisely line up with each other.

First, we understand that there are four Gospels in our Bibles... four different accounts of the life of Jesus, each with its own specific emphasis and purpose. It is not unusual for the same episodes to be relayed with a slightly different emphasis. Different words to bring out a different nuance to more precisely align with the emphasis of each Gospel account, intended to be most meaningful to the readers.

This, though, is not the case here, and does not explain the differences between these two passages from the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. This isn't just a matter of different words used to describe the same episode.

It appears to me that these are clearly ***different*** episodes. The passage from Matthew is part of the *Sermon on the Mount*, while the passage in Luke is in response to an inquiry from His closest friends and followers (Disciples). These are two different episodes in which it appears that Jesus is drawing on what He has established as a pattern of prayer for His followers. In the Luke episode He is responding to his close followers' call for relationship. The Matthew passage is clearly more didactic ("This, then, is how you should pray:"). The chronology here suggests that when Jesus gave these instructions to His close followers, as recorded in Luke, he was repeating what He had said previously in the Sermon on the Mount.

It shouldn't concern us that Jesus repeated Himself... ***of course He did***, just like every teacher must. When we teach, we draw from the same truth, but might present it a different way each time. Sometimes more, sometimes less... with different words, or emphasis, or illustrations... all so as to get the point across. In order for me to believe that Jesus only said everything once (or even precisely the same way each time), I would have to believe that His followers understood it completely the first time... which is, of course, absurd.

² *The Holy Bible : King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995). Mt 6:9-13.

While the Bible certainly gives us a guide and rules to live by... it is much more than a *manual*. And while it is packed with facts and doctrine and history... it is much more than a *text book*. In a manual or a text book, we might expect to find such directions printed only once. But these Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus are something more, and thus we have these two episodes, these two teachings from Jesus, when it comes to the topic of how we, His followers, ought to pray.

So as John and I move through this series, we'll draw from both teachings.

As we endeavor to follow the World's Greatest Prayer (Jesus), we'll look to both versions of The Prayer that Jesus gave His followers.

Let's keep that distinction in mind as well...

We have the Pray-er and The Prayer.

John made the point, so well, last Sunday that this study gives us opportunity to learn from the Master. These words are extraordinary, and worthy of far more than the seven weeks we will give them in this study. But what makes these words of this prayer **most extraordinary** is that they were given by the most extraordinary pray-er: Jesus, Our Savior, the very Word of God.

Far more than a sequence of words, this is the pattern given by the One whom we are called to pattern our lives after.

Dr. Kowalski, with a cookie and cup of coffee in hand after last week's service, pointed out to me in conversation that it appears that His disciples had it right.

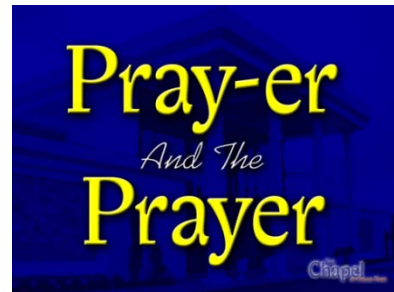
Notice in the Luke passages, in response to observing Jesus as He prayed, "one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us **to** pray.'"

He did not say "teach us **how to** pray." The request was more fundamental than that. It wasn't a search for specific words, or formulas... not a ritual or ceremony.

"Teach us **to** pray." It was as though this close friend and follower of Jesus understood that the way Jesus prayed was something supernatural. It was more than just the right words, but it was an unusual discipline... an *otherworldly* devotion. They wanted to be like their rabbi. In order to be His disciples, they seemed to understand that it would take something unique, something unusual.



So, we too can approach Jesus, asking Him to teach us **to** pray. Our study of these words in this prayer should form the words we pray; this study should shape our prayers. There are specific mechanics of prayer that can be learned.



But more than merely shaping our prayers, we come to Jesus asking Him to shape us as pray-ers.

Jesus said to them (Jesus says to us):

“When you pray, say:
“ ‘Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.³”

Your **Kingdom** come.



If we ask ourselves, “What did Jesus come to **do**?” the answer is pretty clear. Jesus accomplished the will of the Father by redeeming His people. Paying the price that we could not pay, paying a debt He did not owe, Jesus purchased our right-standing before God with His work on the cross. **Jesus came to save us**; that is the simple answer when we ask “What did Jesus come to **do**?”

If we ask ourselves, “What did Jesus come to **teach**?” the answer could be summed-up in this word before us today: **Kingdom**. When we read these *red letters* in our Bibles, these words of Jesus, we see it over and over again: Kingdom.

Jesus, the great teacher, repeated himself on this topic more than any other: Kingdom, Kingdom, Kingdom. With every audience, in every way that He could, He spoke of the Kingdom. He taught about the Kingdom.

Furthermore, it was clear that what He had to teach was something very different than what was commonly understood. While “Kingdom” was a commonly understood word, Jesus had an entirely new concept to introduce. The Kingdom that Jesus came to bring was different than what people expected.

These people, the Jews that first followed Jesus, longed for a great King that would rule in righteous splendor... a King like the great Kings from their past, a King like David who would deliver them from the tyranny of the Roman King (or Caesar) that abused them. Jesus was that King, bringing that very Kingdom that would deliver them... but it was certainly different than what they had conceived.

³ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Lk 11:2.

With such a different Kingdom, the *teaching task* that Jesus faced called for ingenuity. Perhaps the most often used tool Jesus picked-up to convey this new understanding of Kingdom was the **parable**.

The passages read earlier for us today from Matthew 13 were just a sample of parables Jesus taught to open the minds of His followers to this concept of Kingdom.

He said: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³²Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”⁴

MATTHEW 13:31,32

He told them another parable:
“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,
which a man took and planted in his field.
Though it is the smallest of all seeds,
yet when it grows,
it is the largest of garden plants
and becomes a tree,
so that the birds come
and perch in its branches.”

The first followers of Jesus faced with the grandeur of the Roman Empire, and the rule of a powerful Caesar with the awesome strength of the Roman Army. These first followers expected God’s King to arrive on the scene with overwhelming, supernaturally powered force.

But Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom He spoke of with such authority, was like the smallest of seeds. Not huge and powerful, but a tiny seed that is like dust. An insignificant seed that would be buried... yet would eventually grow into something infinitely larger than its beginnings.

He would go on to say that the Kingdom was like:

- Yeast, a proportionally infinitesimal ingredient that changes everything, causing all the other ingredients to expand
- Hidden Treasure, worth giving up everything to have
- Pearl, precisely that which was sought after
- Net, catching abundant righteousness, and also gathering unrighteousness for destruction

MATTHEW 13:33-35

He told them still another parable:
“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast
that a woman took
and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour
until it worked all through the dough.”
Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables;
he did not say anything to them
without using a parable.
So was fulfilled what was spoken
through the prophet:
“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden
since the creation of the world.”

With numerous images, through parables and sermons, demonstrations and teachings, Jesus *chipped away* at His follower’s preconceptions about Kingdom, and taught them a new way. With parables of seeds and weeds, sheep and goats, servants and masters (and on and on), the teaching ministry of Jesus was consumed with teaching all of us followers about His Kingdom (God’s Kingdom).

⁴*The Holy Bible : Today's New International Version.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Mt 13:31-32.

So... the *take away* for us today, the “so what” that we can apply to our lives, today, right here and now that could change us for the better today, could be summed up in these three words.

Let’s make it simple and tie our understanding to these three words today.

Your

Kingdom

Come

Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.⁵

Your

First, let us be reminded that what we are after is **God’s** Kingdom. Just as Christ’s early followers had a different concept than what Jesus had in mind... we, too, naturally come with our wayward preconceptions. We come with our plans, our prescriptions with the way things ought to be.

We naturally come to prayer with an understanding of our great need. We come poor and helpless... sometimes hopeless and desperate. And we see from the whole of the prayer that there is room for our requests... but Jesus teaches that the starting place is by acknowledging God first.

Our Father, You are holy... and before we get to anything else we want our prayer to be about You... **Your** Kingdom Come.

Kingdom

There is an expansiveness that comes with this word Kingdom. Let’s not let the plurality of this escape us. While we should be glad for the personal relationship we can have with God, this prayer is more than just “me and Jesus.” More than just a person’s prayer, this is a people’s prayer.



⁵ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Lk 11:2.

- Teach **us** to pray
- **Our** Father
- Give **us**
- Forgive **us**
- Lead **us**

When we pray “Your Kingdom”, we understand that we have a place among a vastness of people. We pray, too, on behalf of a vast people. And we pray that His Kingdom will increase... that the fruit of our lives will bear seed that will produce fruit in the lives of others.

Come

We are called to make this ongoing plea. When we pray, each time we pray, we ask “come.” Knowing that

- Life continually **drains** the Kingdom from our experience
- We walk away, and
- Our infinite God is inexhaustible



We pray: come. Overwhelm us. Change us. Have Your way with us, in us, and through us. Come.

And more than just a one-time event, we pray continually come. Keep coming Lord. Meet us again. Change us more. Expand Your Kingdom in us and through us.

Your Kingdom Come.

This was the focus that Jesus brought us with His teaching. This is the will of the Father: Your Kingdom come.

Can we make this our goal, our prayer, today?



For the first time, or the ten-thousandth time, we look to Jesus, praying “Your Kingdom Come.” With this prayer, we pray-ers ask God to supernaturally align our hearts and lives with the Kingdom Jesus brings. We say, “This is the life I seek. The way of life, now and throughout eternity, that Jesus taught... that is what I want.” Your Kingdom Come.

This is what we seek. We want to be subjects of Your Kingdom. We want to see Your Kingdom increase. Our Father, You are Holy... Your Kingdom Come.

And let's pray together, again, from our hearts:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

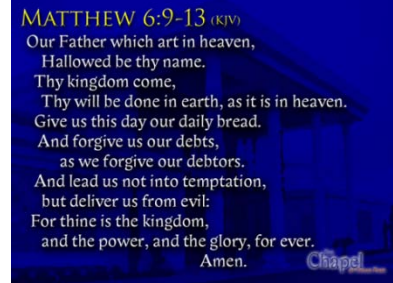
¹⁰ Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. ⁶



⁶ *The Holy Bible : King James Version.*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995). Mt 6:9-13.