

## ENJOYING GOD // Your Kingdom Come

There once was a great king who ruled over a vast and beautiful country with wisdom, justice, and compassion. He had strength that his enemies feared and a kindness that his people cherished. Under his rule there was peace. There was joy among family and neighbors. Everything and everyone in the kingdom blossomed under his rule.

But one day, an enemy deceived the citizens of this great land. He poisoned their hearts with lies, and deceit, and they drove the king from his throne and away from this once great and flourishing land. A great darkness fell upon the people. Everything and everyone became distorted and twisted with selfishness and greed, with hatred and decay.

But there are a few in this land that remain loyal to the true king, because one day, he will return. He will take back his throne. He will cast down his enemies. And he will establish an everlasting kingdom that will never be cast down or destroyed. There will be healing and righteousness, mercy, and justice, and what has now turn to death with blossom with brilliant and unimaginable life that will never fade away.

Do you know how many of our great stories are like this?

Robin Hood. He's fighting because the good king is gone, and darkness and greed has fallen on the land. He's fighting to keep hope alive until the good king can return. King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. On Arthur's tombstone it says, "The once and future King." The king will return one day. The Lord of the Rings. There is a true king hidden in the north that will one day ascend to his throne. Aragorn took his rightful place after Sauron was defeated as the first High King of the Reunited Kingdom. And everything flourished under his rule. The Lion King—Mufasa and Scar, and Simba. Even Shrek! Lord Farquaad was the evil oppressor of all the fairy tale characters and banished them from the land of Far Far Away until Shrek drives Farquaad out and acts as "regent" over the land until he can find King Artie in the third film.

Every great and inspiring story has some element of this within it. Why? Because this is the human story. This is the storyline of the Bible.

Gen 1 begins with a beautiful Kingdom ruled by a great King. Revelation tells us that one day the true King will return, and everything will flourish under His rule. But from the serpent's deception of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 until the true King returns, we're living in a land covered by darkness, a world twisted and distorted by the devil.

There is a remnant of people who are holding out, hoping against hope. People who are fighting the good fight, that are bringing joy and healing and good news to the downtrodden and oppressed that not only will the King return one day, but the kingdom is here now.

This is exactly why the very first request the Jesus teaches us to bring to God in the Lord's Prayer is...

## Matthew 6:10, "Your kingdom come..." (ESV)

The very first thing Jesus teaches us to do in prayer is recognize who we're talking to. He is Our Father in Heaven. There's intimacy, and relationship, and loving connecting with Him. God is holy, set apart, distinct, eternal, infinitely powerful, and only when our love is set on Him will anything else in life make any sense at all.

### WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD? WHY PRAY "YOUR KINGDOM COME"? HOW DO WE ENTER THE KINGDOM?

First, what is a kingdom?

A kingdom is a place that is under the rule and reign of someone. It has its own culture, its own ethics, morals, cultural norms, decrees, laws, and values.

Our job, as followers of Christ, is to know and understand what this Kingdom is so we can align ourselves with King Jesus and measure success the same way He does. To live according to His value system, His training regimen, His will, His priorities, and His commands.

*"...God's own 'kingdom,' or 'rule,' is the range of his effective will, where what He wants done is done. The person of God Himself and the action of His will are the organizing principles of His kingdom, but everything that obeys those principles, whether by nature or by choice is within His kingdom."*

- Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

But there is a significant distinction here. There is a drastic difference between Jesus and every other revolutionary that has ever lived. Jesus was a revolutionary, but He was unlike any other because every other revolutionary in history brought a revolution that was simply making tweaks and adjustments to the old kingdom. They were rearranging the furniture on a sinking ship. Jesus shows up in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and says, *I'm not just rearranging the furniture on the boat, I'm replacing the boat entirely. I'm not just making adjustments to the old kingdom. I'm uprooting it, I'm replacing it. I'm undoing every aspect of life in the old Kingdom, and bringing an entirely different worldview, paradigm, culture, value system, way of life here and now.*

A lot of people, and many Christians for that matter, think that the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of heaven is just where you go when you die. And what that results in is Christians living like their life doesn't matter much. It's this idea that *I trusted in Jesus to save me from my sin way back when, and now I just sort of wait to go be with Him in heaven one day.*

But that's not how Jesus talked about the Kingdom! In Matthew's gospel alone, Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God 53 different times.

We're told to **"Seek first the Kingdom..." Matthew 6:33 (ESV)**. We're told who the Kingdom belongs to and the values of the kingdom in Matthew 5, and we're taught to pray, **"Your Kingdom Come"** in **Matthew 6**. But one of the most common phrases that Jesus uses is that **"the Kingdom of God is at hand, or near. That it has arrived."** **Matthew 3:2**.

***Which means that the Kingdom of God is not where you go when you die.***

The Kingdom of God is here in our midst right now! On earth! And we're invited into it, to become citizens of it—active participants that bring it into our homes and workplaces and every aspect of our lives. The Kingdom of God is not about where you'll end up one day, it's about what God is doing in the world now! Today! It's about the renewal, the restoration, and redemption of all things.

The Kingdom has been made available NOW! And yet, the full culmination of the Kingdom won't come until the true King returns. Here's what that means for God's people. We're like Robin Hood fighting the good fight until the good king returns. Holding to the ways and the values and the hope of that future kingdom knowing that when he returns, we will see the redemption and renewal of all things.

This is why it's called the gospel of the kingdom. it's the good news of the kingdom.

The Apostle Paul says it like this...

**Romans 14:17**, **"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."** (ESV)

The Kingdom of God is not one of anger, or hatred, or bitterness... it's one of liberation, of justice and righteousness, of peace, of JOY!

That's why we pray, "Your Kingdom Come."

**Q:** What specifically are we praying when we pray "Your kingdom come"?

**1. "Your kingdom come" means you want others to experience the kingdom.**

*You're saying, I want to see your Word shared where it isn't currently reaching, I want the news announced everywhere to everyone. "Your kingdom come." Work through me to bring more people into the joy, the privilege, the peace, the blessing that comes from living in your kingdom that is here and now."*

*"So when Jesus directs us to pray, 'The kingdom come,' he does not mean that we should pray for it to come into existence. Rather, we pray for it to take over at all points in the personal, social, and political order where it is now excluded..."*

- *Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy*

It's about cooperating with God to see His kingdom invade every aspect of life.

**Matthew 13:33** He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

Leaven is hidden at first, and then is spread throughout the whole loaf of bread. The kingdom expands, invades, and spreads slowly over a long period of time. How does it spread? Through kingdom people.

## 2. "Your kingdom come," means you want justice established on the earth.

The kingdom of God is based on love, compassion, self-sacrifice, and service. Those are the values of the Kingdom, but we live in a world where greed, retribution, and self-interest are practiced far more widely, and they bring all kinds of pain and injustice into the world.

This is why we're working with our friends in South Asia to set enslaved families free. This is why we support the work of One Gen Away that brings food to thousands and thousands of people every week. This is why we're working with anti-human trafficking organizations in the Nashville area. It's why we established an orphanage in the Dominican Republic. This is why we want to see the abused and the oppressed liberated and made whole again. It's why we believe in making disciples and planting churches.

Because where God's people go, God's kingdom is, and where God's kingdom is, there is an outpouring of righteousness and justice.

So, when you pray, "Your kingdom come," you're praying, Lord take every wrong and make it right. Heal every wound, mend every heart, eliminate all forms of injustice and abuse, set everything right. Establish your Kingdom and bring your righteousness on the earth and use us to do it. Your Kingdom Come.

## 3. "Your Kingdom Come," means you want the Kingdom to go deeper in you.

Saint Augustine said you should never pray "Thy kingdom come" without saying, "And, Lord, let thy kingdom go deeper in me." So, when you pray, "Thy kingdom come," you're saying, *Lord, help me to be more aware of it, more present in it, more sensitive to it. More in alignment with it. Help me live more in accordance with the will of the King and the ways of the kingdom and experience more of the joy, the blessing, the privilege of being a citizen of the Kingdom.*

## 4. "Your kingdom come" means you want the King to return.

It means to hold onto hope no matter what your circumstances look like here and now. It's reminding your heart that one day, the kingdom will arrive, and the One True King will make everything right, we'll be welcomed in to the new heaven and new earth.

The kingdom is here, but it's not yet. Which means there is darkness. There are really painful difficult things that we face. There are days when you wonder if it matters, or if we can take another step, or how we can keep going. There are days when the losses feel too great, the hurt is too deep.

But to pray "Your kingdom come" is to say, "Lord, I know there is a day coming when your Kingdom will be fully established. Where you'll return, and this world will be as you intended it to be. No more tears, no more suffering, no more hate, no more division, no more injustice, no more heartache, and you will comfort your people. And I'm looking forward to that day."

As the great hymn says, "Lord, haste the day when me faith shall be sight, the clouds rolled back like a scroll."

And I can face *this day* because of the assurance of *that day*. The King will come again.

John Calvin has a little prayer he suggests praying every morning when you wake up. It says, "Lord, I lay down last night to sleep, and I rose this morning alive by your grace. Now keep me in the joyful remembrance of my final rising, because Jesus Christ laid down in death for me and rose for my justification." Do you see what he's saying?

"O Lord, all day, keep me in joyful remembrance. Fill me with joy at the thought that someday all this trouble I'm going through will be over. Keep me in the joyful remembrance of my final rising. Someday I'm not going to just wake up from the sleep in my bed; I'm going to wake up into my new body, all because Jesus Christ lay down in death for me and was raised for my justification. I can hope. I can live in the knowledge of that coming kingdom. Thy kingdom come."

This is what it means for us.

### HOW DO WE ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

One of the greatest descriptions of the values of the Kingdom is in Matthew 5. It's Jesus' famous sermon on the mount.

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup> "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (ESV)

It's this great reversal of the world's value system, it's incredible and there's so much here, but what I want you to see today is that many people believe that this is only a description of Christians. That in order to become a Christian, you have to be poor in spirit, which is true. You do have to recognize your spiritual poverty, and those who mourn will be comforted by God. All that is true.

But what we often miss is the fact that all of these things are also a description of what Jesus had to go through in order to open the door to the kingdom to you.

The beatitudes don't just describe Christians. They also describe what Jesus Christ had to go through to open the kingdom to you.

Think about this for a second. Jesus, though He was spiritually rich, became poor, so that we who were poor might become rich with true wealth. To become Kingdom people.

God took on human flesh, and emptied himself and became human, became poor. He was rich, but he gave up his riches and became poor so that we, through his poverty, might become rich.

Why would Jesus say, "You will be satisfied"? Because on the cross he said, "I thirst." Why would Jesus say, "You will laugh and rejoice"? Because he was a man of sorrows. Why can he say, "You will be accepted. You'll be recognized by God. You'll be brought into the kingdom of God"? Because he was cast out.

It's the great reversal. Though he was rich, he became poor, that through his poverty we might become rich. Jesus took upon Himself what we deserve and places upon us what He alone deserves. Jesus paid the price to grant us entrance into the Kingdom that is now and fully arriving one day.

Jesus Christ offered Himself up completely, unto death so that we could receive life in the Kingdom. Today, may the Kingdom go deeper in you, and may your heart find hope in the reality that one day soon, the true King will return, ascend to His throne, and reign with righteousness, compassion, peace, and joy for all eternity.

Amen.