

The Lord's Prayer: Kingdom Come

Big Idea: Our allegiance is first and foremost to the Kingdom of God.

Purpose: To challenge people to embody Kingdom come.

Passage: Matthew 6:9-13 **Verses:** Matthew 6:10

Opening

Story

-When is the last time you thought about your citizenship?

I was at a recent pastor prayer gathering and my pastor friend Scott announced that he had just become a U.S. citizen. Scott is from Scotland and he has the best accent. Why is it that people with British or Scottish or Australian accents just sound more intelligent? Something to ponder. Scott told us that it was a really weird time to become a U.S. citizen as our latest election was the first one he was eligible to participate in. It got me thinking about citizenship.

Like many of you, I was born in this country, so I was a U.S. citizen at birth. I have always taken it for granted. But for many people around the world, becoming a U.S. citizen is like winning the golden ticket.

The three primary ways people become U.S. citizens are by **birth**, through **marriage**, or through the **naturalization** process. To be eligible for U.S. citizenship, you have to have been a lawfully permitted permanent resident of the U.S. for 5 years, be able to read/write/speak basic English, support the principles and ideals of the U.S. Constitution and be a person of good moral character. If someone is eligible for U.S. citizenship, the process takes about 8 months.

Applicants must also fill out a 20-page application, pass background checks, submit a ton of documents, go through a lengthy interview, pass a civics and English test, and pay \$725. To pass the exam you must answer 12 out of 20 questions correctly. There are questions like - *Who does a U.S. Senator represent?* (citizens of a state) and *Why did the U.S. enter the Vietnam War?* (to stop the spread of communism) 91% of applicants pass the exam but only 1 in 3 Americans would pass the exam. Most Americans cannot name how many justices serve on the Supreme Court (9) and the countries the U.S. fought in World War 2 (Germany, Italy, Japan). I hope you have enjoyed this short TED talk on the U.S. citizenship process.

What does this have to do with the Lord's Prayer? The Lord's Prayer speaks directly to our citizenship as followers of Jesus. We cannot pray the Lord's Prayer without being reminded about our rights and responsibilities as followers of Jesus. We cannot pray the Lord's Prayer without thinking about **allegiance**.

Series review

-We are in the 2nd week of a 5-week series on the Lord's Prayer called *Learning to Pray*. Last week we discussed how most of us have no clue how to pray, including myself—and I am paid to pray. Jesus' disciples and the apostle Paul both acknowledged the same struggle. Jesus doesn't shame us for not knowing how to pray. Jesus *tells us* how to pray. Jesus *gives us a prayer* that serves as a model for how to pray. The Lord's Prayer is a guide for praying like Jesus. It provides prompts and catalysts that remind us of the primary things that should occupy our prayers.

The Lord's Prayer also serves as guard rails to keep our prayers centered on the right things. Last week, we explored the first two words of Jesus' prayer which are the most important words of the prayer – ***Our Father***. We pray as children of God. We do not pray alone. We pray as brothers and sisters; children of the King.

-We are challenging everyone to memorize the Lord's Prayer and pray it once a day throughout the series. Josh Breese will be praying it over us today. Feel free to say it along with him.

*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.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen. (Matthew 6:9b-13)*

Six petitions

-We know that we are praying to our Father. What are we praying? What are asking for? There are six petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The first three petitions are petitions focused on God's character and rule. *Hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done.* We will discuss those three petitions today. The second three are petitions asking for God's help in some way. We will explore the last three in the weeks to come.

Petition 1 – Hallowed be Your name

Defining hallowed

-Let's consider the first petition – ***hallowed be Your name***. My theologian friend, Nijay, jokes in his book that as a kid, he thought it was ***hollowed be Your name***. It is not ***hollowed be Your name*** but ***hallowed be Your name***. When was the last time you used the word ***hallowed*** in a sentence? And now Jesus is telling us to use the word in a prayer.

-The word comes from the same Greek root for the word ***holy***. It means ***to sanctify something*** or ***to set something apart***. It can mean ***to honor*** or ***to make something special***.

The first petition is meant to promote the *otherness* of God. **God is not like us.** God is holy and set apart from us. God is something special.

-God covenant name as revealed to Moses is Yahweh – the great I am. Many Jewish people throughout history up until the present did not speak or write God's covenant name. When John got a vision of the throne room of God in heaven, he saw a myriad of angelic creatures circling God saying, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.*"

Recognizing or making?

-The request—*hallowed be Your name*—is asking for a greater understanding and appreciation of God's holiness. It is really hard to do when we are praying from broken hearts in a world that is unholy. On my morning walks, I will often start my time of prayer by speaking forth that ancient song, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come,*" to remind myself of the hallowed God to Whom I pray.

-*Hallowed be Your name.* We are asking for a greater comprehension of God's holiness. But there is more than that going on. Nijay argues, along with many other scholars, that the petition could be translated ***let Your name be hallowed or made holy***. If God is already holy, why are we praying to make Him holy? It might be helpful to think of the Sabbath. We are told *God set apart the Sabbath* as holy. But we also see commands to ***make*** the Sabbath holy. God's people make the Sabbath holy by honoring the Sabbath. God's people **magnify** the holiness of the Sabbath by treating it as holy.

Saving God's face

-In the same way, we magnify God's name, we make his name holy, by honoring God in how we live. Nothing we ever do will make God more or less holy, but how we live as God's people will demonstrate His holiness and magnify His name to people who don't honor Him.

-The Bible was written from an Eastern point of view to people with a largely Eastern point of view. And yet we read it with Western eyes so we miss things. We read things into the text that aren't there. In the West, we largely operate in the framework of ***innocence*** and ***guilt***. In the East, people largely operate in the framework of ***honor*** and ***shame***. I challenge you to start to look for *honor* and *shame* references in Scripture. They are everywhere.

-Jackson Wu is an Asian scholar who writes a lot on this topic. Jackson reveals how honor and shame can be experienced individually, but more often are experienced corporately. When I was a young man, I did things that brought me dishonor. But my actions also brought dishonor to my family name. My parents were deeply affected. An Eastern way of saying this is when we do something dishonorable, ***we lose face***. My actions caused me to lose face but my family also lost face. The opposite it also true. When we do something to bring honor to our name, ***we save face***. We see this dynamic in Scripture. Eastern readers would have seen this clearly.

When Israel practiced idolatry, Moses told them *they profaned the name of their God*. Their actions caused God to lose face. This does not mean that God is less holy, but that God's holiness is shrouded by the actions of those who carry His name. Jackson argues that through the death and resurrection on the cross, Jesus saves God's face by redeeming His fallen children. It is a powerful idea. As followers of Jesus, we can also save God's face. But when we acknowledge God's holiness and we honor God with our lives, we hallow His name, we reveal God's holiness, and save God's face.

-Petition number 1 is ***hallowed be Your name***. Let us know Your holiness. Let us display Your holiness in how we live. Petition number 2 is – ***Your Kingdom come***. Let's go back and touch on a small prepositional phrase we passed over that will inform this petition. Jesus tells us to pray to our Father ***in heaven***. Wait, *our Father is in heaven*? Do we have an absentee father?

Petition 2-3 - Your Kingdom Come, Your Will Be Done

Father in heaven

-Yuri Gagarin was the first human launched into space over 50 years ago. When he returned to earth he said, *"I looked and looked and looked, but I didn't see God."* The Soviets used his quote on a propaganda poster that read – ***There is no God***. Yuri and the Soviets misunderstood Jesus' phrase *Father in heaven*. Let's attempt to define the word *heaven* in its original context.

-The word *heaven* is used in two different ways in Scripture. The first is evidenced in Psalm 19:1. *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.* (Psalm 19:1) In this instance the psalmist is using the word *heavens* to refer to the skies, everything we can see above us. Yuri misunderstood *Father in heaven* by defining it this way. He went into the skies, looked around, and didn't see God, so he assumed there was no *Father in heaven*.

-But Jesus was not using the word *heaven* to refer to the skies. Jesus was referring to the second meaning of *heaven*. We see this meaning emerge very early in Matthew's gospel. In Matthew 3:2 we are told that John the Baptist was preaching this message: *"Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near"* (3:2). We are then told that after Jesus is tested in the wilderness, from that time on He preached, *"Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near"* (4:17). Then later in Matthew's gospel, Jesus sends out his 12 disciples and tells them to proclaim, *"The kingdom of heaven has come near"* (10:17). This was Jesus' primary message in the gospel – *the kingdom of heaven has come near*. Clearly Jesus did not mean that the skies have fallen upon our heads. He is referring to the 2nd meaning of heaven.



-This second meaning of heaven is not a physical place but a *metaphysical realm*. *Metaphysical* means *something beyond human perception*. **The Kingdom of heaven is a metaphysical realm where God reigns.** One scholar says *it is where God's will is done without question or qualification*. Heaven is where God's will is done—apart from the impediment of sin.

-When Jesus tells us to pray *Our Father in heaven*, He is not describing our Father as an absentee dad. Heaven is not a physical place. **God is Spirit and cannot be confined to a physical space.** When we pray *Our Father in heaven*, we are declaring that our dad reigns in a realm beyond our human perception. Our Father sits on the throne in a realm where His will is unquestioned.

Your Kingdom Come

-The petition *Your Kingdom come* is odd to modern Western ears. The Western world is largely governed by democracies. We have rejected monarchies because they proved to be inadequate forms of government. Our best understanding of kingdoms is the British monarchy which seems to me to be nothing more than really expensive window dressing. Let's not think we can watch *The Crown* or a few royal weddings and understand what this petition really means.

-Biblically, logically, a kingdom requires several things. It requires a king. It requires citizens. And it requires land. The Jewish people at the time of Jesus were waiting for the Kingdom of God. They were looking to a *Messiah*, or anointed one, to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. Jesus steps right into the expectation by announcing that *the Kingdom of God*, or the Kingdom of Heaven to use Matthew's phrase, *had arrived in Him*. Through Jesus, the Kingdom of Heaven was breaking into history.

On earth as it is in heaven

-We are to pray for God's kingdom to come ***on earth as it is in heaven***. We continue to pray this prayer because it is quite evident that God's Kingdom has not come *on earth as it is in heaven*. It is quite evident things have not yet been made right. There is a reality to the coming Kingdom that scholars refer to ***as already but not yet***. The Kingdom arrived in Jesus, but the Kingdom has not yet come *on earth as in heaven*.

-I think this simple VEN diagram will be helpful.



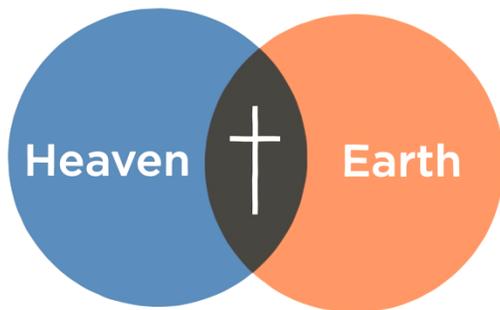
In God's original design ***heaven and earth were one***. God's heavenly rule and reign extended over the earth.

But sin broke that union and ***heaven and earth were torn asunder***.



The gospels portray earth under the rule of Satan. Jesus referred to Satan as the *prince of this world*. When Satan tempted Jesus, he offered Jesus *the kingdoms of the world and their splendor* if Jesus would bow to him. Jesus gave Satan a hard pass on that offer. Jesus knew that those kingdoms would be His to rule one day, but it would take His very life to redeem them.

God promised to restore the union between heaven and earth. God did this by putting on flesh and coming to earth. That is why Jesus proclaimed that *in Him the Kingdom of Heaven has come near*. The Greek word translated 'come near' means *something is coming over the crest of a hill*. It is like experiencing the first rays of the dawn. The death and resurrection of Jesus makes the restoration of heaven and earth possible.



The cross began the process of bringing heaven and earth back together.

We now reside at the intersection of heaven and earth. Through Jesus and those who follow Him, the Kingdom of Heaven is invading earth.

*One day the Kingdom of Heaven will totally eclipse earth—
all things will be made right.*

We had this idea in mind as our New Hope logo was being created. In a subtle way it is meant to suggest God's kingdom coming to earth.



-The battle is not yet won against sin, evil and death. This is often on full display in a world of filled with so much brokenness and pain. Author P.D. James rightly states, *"If the screams of all earth's living creatures were one scream of pain, surely it would shake the stars."* (P.D. James)

God hears those cries. God has done something about it. God is doing something about it. Our tears have an expiration date. The Kingdom of God is upon us. If we look closely, we can see evidence of its restorative work. We get glimpses. We get a foretaste. But the Kingdom has not yet fully come. *The Kingdom is a present reality and a promise yet to be fulfilled.*

-An example some people have used to illustrate this is **D-Day**. On D-Day, Allied forces in World War II secured a foothold on the coast of France in 1944. They did so at great cost. But V-E Day, or Victory in Europe Day, did not occur until 11 months later. Historians

recognize that the Allied forces essentially won the war when they landed in Normandy. But there were many lives that were lost and much damage done before the end of the war. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus was theological D-Day. The war is won even though it is not over.

-When we pray *Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven*, we are praying a prayer of revolution. It is a prayer of protest. It is a prayer that cries out, "How long, Lord?" When we pray *Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven*, we are praying in the expectant hope that, because of Jesus' death and resurrection, one day all things will be made right. We are asking for our Father to let us see and experience in the present the future reality of our world made right. We are asking for tangible previews of that day when death will be swallowed up by life.

Your will be done

-Petition 3 is closely connected to petition 2 and they are held together by the phrase *on earth as it is in heaven*. A simple definition of *sin is placing our will above God's will*.

Our will

SIN

God's will

Inhabitants of the Kingdom of Heaven flip that. *In the Kingdom of Heaven, God's will always reigns over our will.*

God's will

Kingdom of Heaven

Our will

That's why petition 3 is a natural outflow from petition 2. If we pray *Your Kingdom come*, we **must** pray *Your will be done*. The two go hand in hand. God's kingdom cannot co-exist with citizens asserting their will above God's will. **The Kingdom of God is where God's will is done.**

-Do we believe that God's will is best? In a vacuum, most of us would probably say yes. But when God's will demands a costly relinquishment of our own will, we will likely question if God's way is the best way. Jesus gave us an example of how to pray in a moment like this. Jesus is in the garden praying as He faces the reality of the cross. Jesus wonders if there is another way. Here is His prayer: "*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done.*" (Luke 22:42) Sound familiar? Jesus doesn't just teach us how to pray, Jesus lives out His prayer.

-As followers of Jesus, we must pray—and live— *Your will be done*. Jesus said it was the distinguishing characteristic of those who inhabit the Kingdom of God—they *do the will of His Father in heaven* (Matthew 7:21). He said that *those who do the will of His Father are His true brothers and sisters* (Matthew 12:50). As followers of Jesus and inhabitants of the Kingdom, are we willing to pray *Your will be done*? Are we willing to live it?

-I was listening to my daily Scripture reading via an app called *Lectio 365*. I highly encourage you to check it out. On January 1st, they included a prayer by John Wesley that is prayed by millions of people at the start of every new year.

I was excited to pray it until I heard it. Here is the prayer.

I am no longer my own, but Yours.

Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;

Put me to doing, put me to suffering;

Let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,

Exalted for you, or brought low for you;

Let me be full, Let me be empty,

Let me have all things, Let me have nothing:

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things

To Your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

You are mine and I am Yours. So be it.

And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

(John Wesley)

As I listened to this prayer, I took a deep breath. It fully and painstakingly reveals what it looks like to pray *Your will be done*. It is not a half-hearted prayer. It is prayer of utter abandonment to the will of the Father even when it leads to the cross.

Kingdom Living

Our allegiance is first and foremost to the Kingdom of God.

-Back to my friend Scott. When he became a U.S. citizen, he had to stand and say an oath with his hand raised. Here is part of the oath he had to say:

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same...



-Scott was pledging allegiance to the U.S. That word *allegiance* means to show *loyalty or commitment to a superior, group or cause*. The etymology of the word is the combination of *allay*, which means *to tie*, and *liege*. Liege is a feudal term for *someone who followed a king or a lord*. To pledge our al-legi-ance is *to tie ourselves to a king or lord*. It is a powerful word.

-We pledge allegiance to lots of things. Like Scott, you may pledge allegiance to the U.S. If we are married, we pledge allegiance to our spouses. If we are parents, we pledge allegiance to our kids. If we are employed, we might pledge allegiance to our company. If

you are politically active, you might pledge allegiance to a certain political party. If you are a sports fan, you might pledge allegiance to a sports team. (Go Cowboys!)

-But the Lord's Prayer makes it crystal clear that as followers of Jesus, ***our allegiance is first and foremost to the Kingdom of God.*** Go back to the allegiances I mentioned. Add any that I missed. Rank them. Whatever your ranking may be, if you are a follower of Jesus, your allegiance to the Kingdom of God reigns above all other allegiances. All other allegiances take a backseat to our allegiance to the Kingdom. Jesus says it this way, "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" (Matt. 6:33) Some New Testament scholars argue persuasively that the Greek word *pistis* which is often translated as ***faith*** could also be translated as ***allegiance***. Jesus isn't just asking for us to check some box that indicates we are a Christian. Jesus is asking for our allegiance.

-In this sense the Lord's Prayer is our *Pledge of Allegiance*. Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are reminded that our allegiance is first and foremost to the Kingdom of God. We are reminded we have dual citizenship like my friend Scott. But unlike Scott, our *heavenly citizenship*, to use Paul's phrase to the Philippians, trumps all our other allegiances. What does this mean for us? It means that following Jesus should reorient our entire way of living.

-It certainly did so for the earliest followers of Jesus. I am in the midst of reading a ridiculous number of books on this very subject for a class I am taking. I have discovered that the earliest followers of Jesus lived in a world dominated by gods. They had household gods and neighborhoods gods and city gods and national gods. The Caesars who ruled Rome declared themselves to be gods and expected everyone to worship them. Essentially everyone's lives were dominated by worship of gods of all shapes and sizes. Then the way of Jesus shook the Roman empire.

When people became followers of Jesus, they instantly stopped worshipping others gods. They refused to worship household gods, neighborhood gods, city gods and national gods. They would only bend the knee to Jesus who they declared to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Most followers of Jesus paid dearly for this decision. Some lost their families. Some lost their homes. Some lost their jobs. Some lost their lives. *There was a cost to declaring allegiance first and foremost to the Kingdom of God.*

What will our allegiance to King Jesus cost us? When we pray "*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done*", how will our lives change? That is what the Lord's Prayer confronts us with every time we pray it. Praying this prayer and living this prayer is not for the faint of heart. **It is a radical revision and reversal of everything.** It is impossible to pray and live this prayer and stay the same.

The Kingdom comes where it is embodied

-And the Kingdom of Heaven was never meant to stay in heaven. It was never meant to stay in a metaphysical realm. This is one of the great fallacies of modern Christianity. Many followers of Jesus say a prayer to accept Jesus as their Savior and then just wait around waiting to die and go to heaven. Going to heaven is not the goal of our story. **Heaven is**

meant to come to earth. The end of our story is not living in heaven apart from earth. The end of our story is living on an earth that is fully united with heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven was always intended to become physical.

-It is difficult to find an example in the gospels of Jesus and disciples declaring *Kingdom come* without the physical expression of the Kingdom coming. At one point, John was in prison and sent his disciples to Jesus to ask *are you really the One?* Jesus responded,

Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receives sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. (Luke 7:22)

When Jesus later sent out his disciples, he told them *to proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal.* (Luke 9:20) *Kingdom Come* is not some theoretical metaphysical thing that happens in some other dimension. The Kingdom comes to earth as it is in heaven.

-I like to say it like this. ***The Kingdom Comes where is it embodied.*** When we pray *Your Kingdom come*, we certainly are praying for Jesus to return. But we are also praying for the church, Jesus' body, to rise up by the power of the Spirit and begin to usher in the Kingdom in tangible ways that bring healing and wholeness to our world. We don't have to wait for Kingdom Come. The Kingdom is coming every time we show up as the hands and feet of Jesus. As Dallas Willard once said, "*The Kingdom of God is present whenever what God wants done is done.*" (Dallas Willard)

-The Kingdom comes whenever we: *make peace, love our enemies, forgive those who wrong us, tear down barriers, give generously, lift up the vulnerable, free the oppressed, offer hospitality, feed the hungry, give hope to the hopeless, proclaim good news to those who need good news.*

-When we show up as the church, in Jesus' name, to bring healing and wholeness to this world, we can say exactly what Jesus said: *the Kingdom is upon you.* OK, that might be a little much. That might freak people out. Maybe just think it, don't say it. But that is the reality of what is going on.

-Let's not just pray *Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth* as it is heaven - let's live it out. Maybe we can start to pray, *Your will be done in Portland as it is heaven.*

How might we manifest the Kingdom of God to the people in our path this week? That is such a powerful and provocative question.

This week may God's Kingdom come and God's will be done in us and through us, hallowed be His name.