

Prayer: Our Spiritual Lifeline, #5

**Praying:
"Thy Kingdom Come"**

--CEFC 5/6/18

This morning I want to talk about politics—
(I knew that would get your attention!)
though I want to talk about politics in a way you might not expect.

Before I do, I think we should pray—

If I were to ask you, what was the central theme of the preaching of Jesus
when he went around the towns and villages of Galilee,
what would you say?

You might say Jesus taught the fatherhood of God—
You may think of that parable of the prodigal son
where Jesus compared God to that merciful father
who joyfully received his wayward son.

Or you might say that Jesus taught a message of love—
that we are to love one another as he has loved us.

Or you might say that Jesus taught a message of faith—
that if we have faith as small as a mustard seed, we can move mountains.

All of these are possible,
but I would argue that all of these are wrong.
For as you read the gospels, the central theme of Jesus' preaching
was undoubtedly the kingdom of God or of heaven.

After his baptism by John
Jesus began his preaching ministry
and both Matthew and Mark sum up his message with these words:
"Repent, for the kingdom of God is near" (Mk. 1:15; Mt. 4:17)
Matthew immediately adds,
**"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues,
preaching the good news of the kingdom,
and healing every disease and sickness among the people"** (Matt. 4:23).

Jesus talked about who can enter this kingdom,
and the Gospels give us a whole chapter of parables of the kingdom—
telling us what this kingdom Jesus came to bring was like—

It was like a tiny mustard seed that grows into a huge bush,
and it was like a tiny bit of yeast
that permeates the whole batch of dough.

And somehow Jesus himself is the one who brings this kingdom into the world—
**"But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God,
then the kingdom of God has come upon you"** (Matt. 12:28).

Jesus brings the kingdom of God into the world,
for Jesus himself is a King—
At his birth, the magi from the East came looking for this one
who had been born "**king of the Jews**" (Matt. 2:2),
and when he was crucified,
the charge against him was nailed to the cross—
"This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Mt. 27:37).

And Jesus declares that one day his kingship would be seen by all—
when he comes again in glory,
and takes his seat on the majestic throne of judgment
as the King before whom all the nations will be gathered,
and he will separate the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:31-46)./

Yes, Jesus spoke of the Fatherhood of God,
and he taught a message of love,
and he called for faith in our loving Father,
but all of that was couched within this central theme of the kingdom of God—
this kingdom that he was bringing into the world./

The kingdom of God was central to the message of Jesus
because I think it is fair to say that the kingdom of God
is central to the message of the whole Bible.

For how does the Bible begin?
It begins with God as the majestic and transcendent Creator of all things—
and he creates Adam and Eve to rule over his creation
under his ultimate authority.

God is King—he reigns supreme.
Adam and Eve are the people who live under his rule,
and the whole earth is his realm.

But you know what happens—
God's rule is rejected.
In an act of cosmic rebellion, Eve and then Adam
eat of the forbidden fruit—
and the kingdom God had created is disrupted,
and it is corrupted.

The story of the Bible from this point on can be seen as the movement of God's grace

to reestablish his kingdom—
creating a people who willingly accept his rule,
and who experience once again the blessing that comes within his royal realm.

The Lord chooses Abraham as the father of this new people
through whom that blessing to all nations will come
and he promises them a land in which to live.
He raises up Moses to deliver the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt
and he gives them his royal law.
But over and over, Israel rebels against God's righteous rule—
the people fail to live under his supreme authority;
they go their own way;
they worship other gods.

The book of Judges shows us the social and moral chaos that results
when there is no king in Israel
and everyone does what is right in their own eyes.
The Israelites reject God as their king;
instead they want a human king, like all the other nations, to lead them into battle—
and God gives them a king—
and King David becomes a pointer to a still greater king
who was to come--
a king who would defeat their enemies
and bring peace and blessing to their nation.

David's son Solomon seems to be a fulfillment of that promise.
He builds a glorious kingdom,
but Solomon had a divided heart toward God.
And upon his death his realm splints in two.
and because of their sin, first the northern kingdom of Israel
and then the southern kingdom of Judah,
is conquered and sent into exile.

The prospect of establishing God's kingdom
on the foundations of the human institutions of Israel looks grim.

At this point in the biblical story
there emerges an increasing conviction that God's kingdom
can only be established by God himself.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel all point to the fact that
the human heart is too hard,
its disease is too advanced,
the effects of sin are too great.

The Lord himself must come in power to set things straight.
There must be a new Exodus by which God would redeem his people.

There must be a new covenant,
a covenant in which he would plant his law
within the hearts of his people by his Spirit.

There must be a new Jerusalem with a new temple,
and a new Davidic king to rule over a new and glorious kingdom.

Isaiah speaks of a child to be born,
a son to be given,
"and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this." (Isa. 9:6,7; cf. 11:1ff)

The Old Testament speaks of the coming of the kingdom of God--
it would be a time of justice, righteousness, and peace--
the wicked would be punished,
the godly vindicated--
and all things would be set right.
God's people would live in an everlasting relationship of love
with their heavenly Father./

The coming of the kingdom of God--
that promise provides the backdrop of Jesus' dramatic proclamation—
"Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

In Jesus God was bringing his kingdom, his righteous rule, into the world.
Jesus is the way into this kingdom.
As God, Jesus is God's King,
exercising God's authority in the world.
And as man, Jesus is also God's perfect subject—
the perfectly obedient servant of the King.
He then offers his own life as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice
for our sin.

In his triumphant resurrection,
he conquers our great enemy—sin and death—
and he is exalted as King to the right hand of the Father.

So it is, through our union with Jesus, our representative and substitute,
that we enter into this divine kingdom.
For it is through our faith in Jesus as our Lord
that we accept the rule of God in our lives.

Make no mistake--God is King—he now rules perfectly in the heavenly realm.
God is King, but he must become our King—
his rule must be acknowledged and accepted here on earth.
Jesus called people to enter into this kingdom
by receiving the rule of God in their lives through their faith in him.

God himself must become our highest authority,

to whom belongs our supreme allegiance.
This God who reveals his great love for us as our **Father**,
this God who is **holy** and **righteous** and **just** in all that he is and all that he does--
this God must be recognized and accepted as our King.
So we are to pray,
"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

So the first thing that we mean when we pray this prayer--
is that in my life, and in your life, we recognize God's rule in our lives--
as God's rule in found in Jesus Christ--
God's anointed King.
Jesus is the risen Lord, who even now is seated at the right hand
of the throne of God,
to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

I like the way Dutch Prime Minister of a century ago, Abraham Kuyper, put it--
"there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence
over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: **'Mine!'**"¹

"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
This is a prayer that we submit our lives--in every area of our lives--
to the righteous and loving rule of our Lord Jesus Christ. /

Just think of what this means--
Through our faith in Christ, we become citizens of a new kingdom--
Yes, I can pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America--
but that cannot be my highest allegiance.

My ultimate identity is not inscribed on my passport or my birth certificate,
much less is it found in my political party affiliation.
My ultimate identity is established at my baptism--
Jesus Christ is my Lord, my Master, my King.

Surely, this has important political implications.

I can support the American values of freedom and equality and justice--
but I now understand them in a new way--
In the kingdom of God, freedom is not the unfettered conscience,
the absence of all restraints,
the freedom to pursue whatever I desire.
True freedom is the ability to know and to choose what is right;
it necessarily includes a personal self-governance and the pursuit of virtue;
it requires hearts that are shaped to desire what is good.

In the kingdom of God, equality is not based on some political notion
of universal human rights,

¹ Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, p. 488, cited in Carson, *Culture Revisited*, p. 214.

but on the God-given dignity of every human life created in the image of God.

And as those created in God's image,
human beings flourish not just as individuals under a centralized government,
but in relationship with others in God-given social institutions—
like families and churches.

As citizens of heaven, our conceptions of justice must be grounded in God's justice—
God's justice is more than mere procedural neutrality;
it is a justice tempered with compassion and mercy,
with a special concern for the poor and the powerless.

It is a justice that recognizes the sinfulness of the human heart
and the corruption that can creep into the structures of society,
as the powerful make the rules that tend to maintain their own power.

And as a citizen of God's kingdom I am compelled
to obey the governing authorities here on earth
not out of some philosophical principle of the consent of the governed,
but out of the conviction that in obeying the governing authorities
I am obeying God.

And if those governing authorities demand something of me
contrary to what God demands,
I must obey God rather than man.

This is what it means to pray
"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

So when you pray this prayer,
pray for yourself—
Give thanks that you have such a glorious King who rules in righteousness—
rejoice that Christ is Lord and that he is your Lord.
Pray that you may willingly, even joyfully,
submit to your loving and gracious King in every way.

Pray that that kingdom, that rule of God, may come in your life.

But it must be broader than that—
For we are not citizens of God's kingdom alone—
we are a part of a people—
a people who together respond to the call of Christ the King.

And that people becomes visible in his church.

This prayer—
"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"—
is also a prayer for the church
that we as a church become an outpost of that kingdom in this world.

In 2 Cor. 5 (v. 20) Paul calls us "**ambassadors**" of our great King.

That makes the church an earthly embassy of his heavenly dominion.

We operate under the authority of a different sovereign than those in the world around us.

We are in the world, but not of it.

Just as the British embassy is in the USA but not of it—

It represents the United Kingdom,

and the ambassador there gets his orders from London.

So Jesus Christ is our King.

We are his emissaries, entrusted with his message.

We look to him for our assignments,

and we are accountable to his commands.

And as ambassadors in this embassy of heaven we exercise his authority—

In the church as we are given responsibility to speak for him in this world—

we are to be faithful stewards of his gospel truth.

And in the church as we are given the responsibility of issuing passports, as it were,
to those who want to enter that heavenly kingdom.

In a sense, that's what we did last Sunday in our baptism.

We didn't make Susan and Andrew Christians,

but we as a church officially acknowledged them as such publicly

through their profession of faith in baptism.

The church is authorized by our King to proclaim his message

and to declare who constitutes his people.

And as an embassy of that heavenly kingdom on earth

we are to point people to its distinctive way of life—

a way of life that reflects the character of our King—

a life of love, joy, and peace,

a life of compassion, kindness, humility,

gentleness, and patience.

Micah 6:8—"And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God."

And this notion of the church as an embassy of that heavenly kingdom on earth--

that has political implications, too.

For in the church we are to model to the world around us

a new form of political order—

one not based on competing self-interests,

and the manipulation of power for personal gain.

The politics of the Kingdom of God are based on love—

God's grace and truth in the gospel working itself out

as we seek God's will together,

doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,

but in humility considering others better than ourselves,

looking not only to your own interests,

but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:3,4).

The model citizen in this kingdom —the one we are to emulate and imitate—
is the One who

**"being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!"** (Phil. 2:6-8).

The greatest in this kingdom is the servant of all. /

So this prayer—

"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"—
is a prayer for the church—
that we might be a faithful ambassadors of our King
and that we might represent him well
in his earthly embassy of the church,
that we might truly be a community of grace and truth—
the grace and truth that are embodied in King Jesus.

In the church—that's where our politics should begin—
that's where we practice the political virtues of this new kingdom—
the kingdom of God.

When you pray this prayer,
pray for our church to grow in holiness—
may we find a rich unity in Christ
that is displayed in real acts of love toward one another.
May we build one another up in the faith,
encouraging and comforting and challenging one another
to walk in ways reflect well on our King.

But this prayer must be still broader than that—

This prayer not just about my own response to the authority of God in Christ;
nor the way that authority is worked out among us together in his church.

When we pray

"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"
we also want to see that kingdom expand into the whole world.
We want Christ to be seen to be the King that he is,
and to be acknowledged and received as King by everyone.

So this pray necessarily involves us in mission—
the kingdom expands supremely

through the sharing of the gospel with other people.
The gospel message has a power to overcome the rebellion of the human heart;
when energized by the Spirit, it can penetrate strongholds
and somehow bring about repentance and faith.
And when that happens—
when a person comes to see the glory of Christ as King—
and surrenders to his Lordship in humble faith—
the kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.

When you pray this prayer,
pray for the furtherance of the gospel—
pray for your family members, your friends, your co-workers,
your neighbors, your fellow students
to come to know the love of Christ
and to bow to his authority in their lives.
Pray for our missionaries as they share the gospel across cultures and in other lands;
pray for faithfulness and fruit in their work.

**Pray for God's kingdom to come, and his will to be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

But that's still not the end of it—
You see, God's kingdom is the world as it is supposed to be.
It's what is found even now in heaven—
God's good will ruling over all.
That heavenly world is a world of *shalom*—the peace of God—
it's a world characterized by grace and truth,
compassion and justice.

So when we pray for God's kingdom to come,
we pray for those things, too, here and now
on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray for the victims of war—
that they may find refuge;
we pray for the victims of abuse—
that they may find restoration,
and that the abusers may be held to account.

we pray for those in poverty—
that they may find relief and compassionate help.

We pray for those who are sick—
that they may be healed.

We pray for those who are oppressed—
that they may find justice.

We pray for those who are denied dignity—
that they may find value in their Creator,
and an appropriate honor in the eyes of others.

Here's one important catch in all this,
it's the political challenge that comes with this prayer.

We need the humility to recognize that there are various political paths
toward these good ends.
And we may disagree among ourselves about the right governmental policies
that ought to be pursued to achieve them.

That's OK.

There is not one solution to the problem of poverty in the Bible.

The Bible gives us various principles that must be worked out.

But what is the best policy in any given circumstance

is a matter of wisdom and discernment in seeking to apply those principles,
and we may differ as to how those principles interact with one another.

We are called to live with those differences in love,

recognizing that those policy differences don't define us.

We are defined by our common citizenship in God's kingdom.

That's what matters most.

But let us not stop praying for and working for the flourishing of peace and justice

and the right ordering of our world—

for that too represents something of the coming of God's kingdom

on earth as it is in heaven.

That's what we pray when we say,

"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"

We pray for ourselves,

for our church,

and for the world—

that God's good will may be reign supreme on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray for all of this now—

for in Jesus Christ God's kingdom has entered into this world.

It has begun to be manifest.

The church is the first fruits of what is to come.

In the words of John Howard Yoder,

"The church does communicate to the world what God plans to do,

because it shows that God is beginning to do it."²

In Jesus Christ the kingdom of God has come into this world--

but it didn't come through a show of force;

it didn't involve an invading army,

or in the coercive power of the sword.

This kingdom entered the world quietly, and humbly,

as a baby in a manger;

like a mustard seed planted in the ground,

like yeast that is kneaded into a lump of dough.

It came in the form of a servant who washed his disciples' feet

²*The Royal Priesthood*, p. 74.

and who willingly gave his life on a cross.
It was from that cross that our King first reigned.

That's the distinctive shape of the politics of the kingdom of God—
it is fostered best by those who follow in the steps of their King,
and who use the same means he used to achieve his ends--
acting in humble service and self-denying love,
even loving our enemies,
and being willing to suffer for what is right.

This kingdom doesn't need to grab headlines or make a big splash—
it doesn't depend on PAC money or celebrity endorsements.
God can use the weak and the insignificant to accomplish his purposes.
We can all play our part in whatever role God has given us to perform.
But one thing we can be sure of—
Nothing in this world can stop its advance—
not even death itself.

God's kingdom cannot fail.

And one day, what is hidden will come to light;
Our humble King will show his true glory—
He will come to earth and sit on his heavenly throne
and all the nations will be gathered before him,
and he will separate the sheep from the goats.

That Kingdom which has dawned in this age
will be consummated in the age to come—
and there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

**"He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,
for the old order of things will have passed away"** (Rev. 21:4).

And when we pray
"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"—
this, too, is what we pray for—
the coming of Jesus in glory
to bring to completion what he has begun.

May we pray that prayer with real conviction and hope
in the midst of this fallen world.
God is not finished with his glorious work
of restoring his rule to this rebellious world.

His kingdom will come, his will will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

So until then we pray, **"Come, Lord Jesus. Amen."**
"Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"//

I invite our servers to come forward as we prepare to share in the Lord's Supper together—
first, let's pray.

Prayer:

Our Great God, through your Son you have taught us to pray—
and in these last three weeks we have been learning to pray—
We address you as "our Father"—
what a wondrous thing it is that we can come before you in that way—
knowing that you love us, you provide for you, you protect us and guide us
as a gracious heavenly Father.

And when we pray we are taught to be concerned with the honor of your name—
for you are holy—you are perfectly pure and righteous in every way—
and we are to respect and revere you as the source of all
goodness, truth and beauty.

And Lord, you are King—
you are our highest authority—you rule
and our prayer is that your gracious and just rule
may come to earth as it is in heaven.

May we not seek a name for our selves—
in all the little ways that we puff ourselves up in the eyes of others—
but may we seek the honor of your name.

May we not seek to build our own little empire—
some realm where we can exercise our power over others.
but may we seek the coming of your kingdom.

May we not seek our own will, always demanding our own way,
and getting angry when that will is frustrated.

Instead, may we seek your will—
for your will is always good and right and ultimately good for us.

Lord Jesus, help us to pray as you prayed.

Let's pray together that Prayer the Lord taught us
(it is printed on the back of the sermon outline)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those

who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

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

Communion--

We come now to this communion table—

This is the Church's family meal,
our community gathering
for all those who have been recognized
as fellow citizens in God's kingdom.

If you profess Jesus as your Savior and your King,
and if Christ's embassy of his kingdom in the world-- his church--
has affirmed your faith in Christ—
through baptism or confirmation or church membership—
then you are welcome to share in this table.

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus,
or you've not yet professed that faith to God's people,
then let these elements pass.
Reflect on this kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed—
ask God to open the door to that kingdom in your heart
that you may be received by the King
when he comes in his glory.

Words of institution--

Prayer: Our Spiritual Lifeline, #5
May 6, 2018

**Praying:
"Thy Kingdom Come"**

Jesus' model prayer calls us to a new political orientation—our highest allegiance is to the rule of God. We are to pray that God's kingdom is manifest *now* in fragmentary ways in our lives, in the church, and in the world, and in the *future* in its fullness when Christ returns in glory.

I. May God's Kingdom Come *Now*—

A. In My Life

Living with Christ as Lord

B. In Christ's Church

*The Church as an earthly embassy
of a heavenly Kingdom.*

C. In God's World

*Sharing the gospel
and seeking compassionate justice
by following our Crucified Messiah*

II. May God's Kingdom Come *Soon*—

"Come, Lord Jesus!"

Discussion Questions:

**Praying:
"Thy Kingdom Come"**

- How is "the Kingdom of God" perhaps the central theme of the Bible?
- How is the coming of the Kingdom of God both present and future?
- What would the coming of the Kingdom of God look like in your life?
- What would the coming of the Kingdom of God look like in our church?
- How did Jesus bring the Kingdom of God into the world? How do we bring the Kingdom of God into the world?
- How is the Kingdom of God a "political" concept? How should it affect our politics?

• Review the memory verse: Phil. 4:6,7. Consider this quote from Martin Luther: "Pray and let God worry."

• Discuss your "prayer goals" for the month. How are you doing?

*Take some time to pray together in your group—

Use the ACTS pattern, guiding by your group leaders, spending a few minutes in each category.