

Sermon – Your Kingdom Come
Sunday May 21, 2023

What's your ambition?

This week, I talked to a young adult who told me that his ambition is to travel around the world and enjoy food everywhere he goes.

I also talked to a teenager who told me that her ambition is to make \$2M after she graduates from university.

After I graduated from university, my ambition was to build my career as a Chartered Accountant and one day possibly make partner.

What's your ambition?

- Maybe you want to play sports at a high level.
- Maybe you want to be an influencer.
- Maybe you want to find the perfect job.
- Maybe you want to be in a relationship and have a family.

Alexander the Great had an ambition. He wanted to conquer the world. Like, he literally wanted to conquer the world! At the age of 20, he became the king of Macedon. At the age of 25, he conquered the Persian Empire. By the time he was 30, he had conquered Western Asia and Egypt and created the largest empire in the ancient world. But he died when he was only 32.

Throughout history, we've seen the rise of many kingdoms. But all human kingdoms eventually fall.

Two thousand years ago, a different kind of king came along. One with a simple message. The time has come... the kingdom of God is near. This kingdom would surpass any human kingdom the world has ever known.

So what is this kingdom? And what does it mean to pray that his kingdom would come?

We're in a series called *Pray Like Jesus*. We've been unpacking the Lord's Prayer and looking at how Jesus teaches us how to pray. We've made available a **Lord's Prayer Guide** with many helpful reflections and prayer points based on the Lord's Prayer. Many of you have told us how helpful it's been for you and how you've been growing in your prayer life. So if you don't have this resource yet, you can download it using the information on the screen.

<https://cornerstonechurch.ca/lordsprayerguide>

So let's recap where we've been in this series so far.

We started with the opening address of the Lord's Prayer – *Our Father in heaven*. The word *our* calls us into community with each other as members of God's family. The word *Father* calls us into intimacy with God. And the phrase *in heaven* reminds us that God isn't distant and removed, he's near and able.

Last week, we looked at the first petition of the Lord's Prayer - *Hallowed be your name*. This is a prayer that God would be the ultimate treasure of our hearts and the most important thing in our lives.

Now today we're moving on to the next part of the Lord's Prayer. But before we do that, let's all stand and let's all pray the Lord's Prayer together.

**Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.
¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today the food we need,^[a]
¹² and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
¹³ And don't let us yield to temptation,^[b]
but rescue us from the evil one.^[c]**

(Matthew 6:9-13, NLT)

Now the first half of the Lord's Prayer focuses on God and his character. The second half focuses on our needs and our requests.

But today we come to the heart of the Lord's Prayer. We come to the petition: *Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Today we're going to talk about the Kingdom of God - I'm indebted to John Ortberg for one of his sermons. Now what I want to do today is look at two questions. What is God's kingdom? And what does it mean to pray Your Kingdom Come?

First, What is God's kingdom?

But before answering that, we really need to ask, What is a kingdom?

Because we live in a democracy. We're not familiar with kingdoms. When you think of a kingdom, you probably think of Gondor in Middle-Earth, Wakanda in the Marvel universe or the Magic Kingdom in Florida.

You see, we tend to associate kingdom with a place. But in the Bible, a kingdom doesn't refer to a place, it refers to the rule and reign of the king.

Dallas Willard describes a kingdom like this. A kingdom is the sphere in which what you say goes. It's the range of your effective will. It's where what you want to happen happens.

Now did you know that you have a kingdom? It's true. That's why you don't like it when your parents tell you to clean up your room. That's why you don't like it when people cut you off on the road. That's why you want to be the one who holds the remote control. Why? Because you have a kingdom.

I can prove it. What's a two-year-old's favourite word? No. What's their second favourite word? Mine. What are these words? They're kingdom words. A two-year old isn't just being selfish. A two-year old is learning that they have a kingdom. And that's a good thing. Unless of course you're the parent of that two-year old, because then it might not feel like a good thing. But it is. And having a kingdom is part of what you were created for.

This goes back to Creation. In Genesis 1, it says:

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make human beings^[a] in our image, to be like us. They will *reign* over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,^[b] and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”...

²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. *Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.*”

(Genesis 1:26, 28, NLT)

Listen to these words: *Fill the earth, govern it, reign over the animals.* What kind of words are these? They're kingdom words. Because you have a kingdom. God's will for you is to reign with him. To extend his kingdom in the world.

How do you do this? By reflecting God's character. By working for justice. By serving others. By taking care of his creation.

You have a kingdom. Your kingdom could be your school, your sports team, your work, your home or your community. These are the places where you have influence and can exercise your reign.

But here's the problem. Your kingdom has been infected by sin. Because your primary ambition isn't to expand God's kingdom. Whose kingdom do you want to expand? Your kingdom.

How do you do that? You do that when you want personal glory. When you want what you want. When you want things to go your way. When you get angry because something gets in the way of your goal.

And what happens is your kingdom merges with other kingdoms to form larger kingdoms. They form schools, neighbourhoods, corporations and nations. These kingdoms represent systems of power. They shape how you live, how you think and how you understand your identity. The biblical term for these kingdoms is the kingdoms of earth.

Question: How are things going in the kingdoms of earth?

Not so well.

- There's gender inequality, income inequality, racial inequality.
- There's environmental pollution, global warming, water scarcity.
- There's corruption, divided communities, military conflict.

When you think about the problems of the world, do you know what kind of problems they are? They're kingdom problems. Your kingdom and my kingdom have been corrupted. They clash with other kingdoms. You want your way and I want my mine and the result is a big mess. That's why we have the problems that we do in our world. Because that's how things are with the kingdoms of earth.

But the Bible talks about another kind of kingdom. In the Old Testament, the prophets talked about a time when God would intervene in history to restore his fallen creation. God would establish his kingdom on earth one day and set all things right.

Now imagine a world where there's no evil. There's no pride, abuse or greed. Instead, people use their power to serve others, to protect the weak, to care for one another. Imagine a world where people thrive and communities flourish. Imagine a world where righteousness flows, where peace reigns, where justice rules. Do you know what world it is that you're thinking about? It's the kingdom of God.

Now kingdoms are mutually exclusive. If you want to be a citizen of God's kingdom, you need to transfer your allegiance from your kingdom to his kingdom. One of the ways we celebrate this event is through baptism. **Baptism** is a public declaration that you want to follow Jesus as King.

Our next baptism is on June 11th but the deadline to sign-up is tomorrow. So if you're interested, please let us know no later than tomorrow using the information on the screen.

<https://cornerstonechurch.ca/baptism>

Now the kingdom of God is where God rules as king, it's where his will is done, it's where what he says goes. The kingdom of God is already but not yet. What does that mean?

First, it means that the kingdom of God is already here.

The time has come... The kingdom of God has come near... (Mark 1:15)

In the gospels, Jesus' miracles proved more than just show God's power and God's love. They proved that God's kingdom had arrived. What does that kingdom look like?

- It looks like the blind seeing, the lame walking, the demons banished.
- It looks like sins forgiven, captives set free, and outcasts being welcomed.
- It looks healing in every area of life that restores people and communities to God's original design.

This, says Jesus is the kingdom of God – and the kingdom of God is here.

The kingdom of God is also not yet fully established. Jesus says that the kingdom of God is still in process. It's like a small mustard seed that grows into the largest of trees. It's like a little yeast that makes the dough expand.

The kingdom of God is already here, but it's not yet fully established. That's why Jesus tells us to pray, Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Because things in the world aren't the way God wants them to be. So Jesus invites us to pray Your Kingdom Come. How do we do that? Here are three ways.

First, **Yearn for God's kingdom.**

What does it mean to yearn? To yearn is to eagerly desire something with a deep and persistent longing.

Some of you are yearning for something right now. You're yearning for a vacation. You're yearning for a relationship. You're yearning for this sermon to end.

Praying Your Kingdom Come means to yearn for God's future world of justice and peace. But where does this desire come from?

In his book Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis writes:

“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water... If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world... If that is so, I must... keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that country and to help others to do the same.”
(C.S. Lewis)

Have you ever felt like something’s not right with the world? Have you ever wondered why things in this world don’t truly satisfy? Why is that? It’s because you were made for another world. You were made for God’s kingdom. And when Jesus comes back and brings heaven to earth, you’ll finally be home.

So as C.S. Lewis reminds us, Keep your desire for your true country alive. Make it the main object of your life to press on to that country and help others to do the same.

How do you do that? Especially when there’s so much suffering and injustice? You pray.

- You pray for the world.
- You pray for God’s healing.
- You pray for the defeat of evil.
- You pray for Jesus to return and set things right.

What will that look like?

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”^[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’^[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

So what do we do in the meantime? We pray. We pray for God’s kingdom. We pray for God’s justice. We pray for Jesus to return.

The second way we pray Your Kingdom Come is by **Demonstrate the reality of God’s kingdom in our lives.**

Someone once said, that the church is a sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God. (Lesslie Newbiggin)

Now what does a sign do? It draws people’s attention. It points them to a bigger reality. You and I are a sign. We’re to draw people’s attention. We’re to point others to Jesus and his kingdom. How do we do that?

Jesus says, **let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt 5:16)**

My wife Joanne works in the hospital as a therapist. Hospitals right now, as many of you know are overcrowded. Things are so stressful that many workers have left leaving those who remain burned out.

It's easy for staff to feel overwhelmed and just do the minimum. But Jo goes to work every day with a cheerful attitude and a desire to help others. She thinks of every patient as her mom or dad and gives the same care she would to her own parents. She thinks of the stress families are going through and she supports them with compassion.

She takes care for her team as well. She talks with people who are feeling down, she gives notes and gifts to cheer people up, she organizes birthday parties and social functions.

When her colleagues are discouraged and stressed, Jo is a light for Jesus in her workplace.

Where has God placed you? In a school, on a sports team, at home, in your workplace, in your neighbourhood?

When people see you, what do they see?

- Someone who reaches out to show kindness?
- Someone with integrity who tries to do the right thing?
- Someone who goes above and beyond to serve others?
- Someone who speaks out and acts for justice?

Wherever God has placed you, how can you be a light for Jesus in your kingdom this week?

The third way we pray Your Kingdom Come is by **Surrender your personal ambitions.**

I know some of you are sitting there right now saying What?! Are you telling me I can't have personal goals? Are you telling me that striving and achieving aren't spiritual?

Of course not. The Bible is full of goal-oriented high-achievers. People with great ambition who loved God and honoured him. But the Bible makes a distinction between two types of ambition.

The first type is a selfish ambition.

The former preach Christ out of *selfish ambition*, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. (Philippians 1:15)

The Greek word for ambition here is *eritheia*. This kind of person looks after themselves and seeks their own glory. They want recognition and rewards for their personal achievements.

Then there's another kind of ambition. It's a holy ambition.

It has always been my *ambition* to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. (Romans 15:20)

The Greek word for ambition here is *philotimouo*. This kind of person serves other people. They consider their interests and fight for their good.

What kind of ambition do you have? An ambition for your glory? Or an ambition for God's glory?

The Apostle Paul was an ambitious person. Before his conversion, he had a selfish ambition. He wanted to expand his personal kingdom. He lived a self-righteous life and persecuted Christians.

But after his conversion, God gave him holy ambitions. He planted churches, raised up leaders and taught Christians how to live. But Paul makes it clear that only one ambition is his greatest motivation. What's that ambition?

It's to know Jesus. Paul describes this in Philippians 3. (Now I want you to remember Philippians 3 because it's going to come up again, okay?)

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ... ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil 3:7-8, 10-11)

Paul's ambition wasn't to be the greatest missionary. It wasn't to write half the New Testament. What was Paul's greatest ambition?

To know Jesus. To follow him. To serve him and his people. When you pray Your Kingdom Come you're praying that this will be your greatest ambition as well.

When I became a Christian this was my ambition... or so I thought. Because that ambition was tested 20 years ago. I mentioned earlier that I used to be a Chartered Accountant. I enjoyed my career and the status I had. But I also sensed God calling me to be a pastor.

So I made the hard choice to quit my job. I was in my second year of seminary and began feeling anxious about my future. Am I making the right decision? Should I go back to accounting where I had a great career, status and financial security?

I knew God was calling me into ministry, but I didn't know if I could give all that up. So I shared this with my seminary prof. He listened patiently. Then he pulled out his Bible and read a passage. Any guesses what passage he read?

But whatever were *gains* to me I now consider *loss* for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a *loss* because of the *surpassing worth* of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may *gain* Christ... (Phil 3:7-9)

Then my prof asked, Does anything stand out for you from this passage? I said no. Then he said, Do you notice what kind of language Paul is using? With accounting terminology! Gains, profits, losses, worth...

God got through to me that day. I finished seminary. I became a pastor. And this July I'll have pastored here for 18 years.

Now why am I telling you this story? I'm not telling you this not because I think you should quit your job and go into ministry – unless that's what God is clearly calling you to do. I'm telling you this because you only have one life to live and God doesn't want you to waste it.

Because you have a kingdom. God has given you gifts and abilities. He's given you a platform to influence others. So don't use your ambition to merely build your own kingdom. Don't use it to impress other people or to make a name for yourself. All the rewards and recognition you gain won't satisfy you anyway.

But instead make your ambition to know Jesus. Give him the first place in your heart. Surrender your will and your personal agenda. And use your abilities and influence to build God's kingdom. Be an instrument of healing. Serve other people. And make an impact for Jesus wherever you go.

Jesus said, Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.