

Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom

The Unlikely Kingdom • Message 4

JC Thompson

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Pray for a heart that yields fully to God's will.
- Ask for daily trust in God's faithful provision.
- Invite God to work through you in everyday moments.

Scripture Reading:

"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."

Matthew 6:10-13 (NIV)

A. Introduction.

Your kingdom come...

Jesus teaches us to pray these words. But let's be honest, what do they really mean?

Literally. What are we asking for when we pray that? We are, by culture and instinct, deeply allergic to kings.

The American story is of throwing off the crown. We celebrate revolutions, not thrones. We don't wait for decrees; we cast votes. We don't say *Thy will be done*; we say, *You do you*. We do not want to give up control.

We are self-made, self-directed, and self-sufficient. In our culture, we romanticize the lone wolf, the entrepreneur, the rebel.

So, when Jesus opens His prayer with the words: *Your Kingdom come. Your will be done.*

It lands oddly to many of us. Your kingdom? Your will? What about me?

But Jesus isn't inviting us to vote Him in. He's declaring a Kingdom. A kingdom that is coming and demands that all will bend the knee to the King.

We want Jesus. We just don't want to lose control.

We'll follow Jesus as long as we get to choose the terms. We'll trust Jesus as long as He doesn't mess with our plans.

We'll obey Jesus when it aligns with what we were going to do anyway.

But deep down, many of us carry this subtle fear:

If I really surrender to Jesus, what about my dreams? If I let go of control, what if Jesus leads me somewhere I don't want to go? If I pray, 'Your Kingdom come,' will mine fall apart?

Has all this control actually made us more free?

They are starting to call this autonomy anxiety. We've never had more choices, yet we're more anxious than ever. More choices does not lead us to more freedom and peace.

Yet Jesus is offering us a different story, a different narrative in these petitions of the Lord's prayer.

Because if Jesus is right, if there really is a Kingdom breaking into our world, maybe true freedom won't ever be found in more control over our choices, but instead in giving them up.

B. The Kingdom of God is marked by...

1. A POWERFUL and BENEVOLENT King. (Matthew 6:10. C/R: 1 Samuel 8:10-22; Matthew 7:21)

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:10 (NIV)

Jesus is not only teaching us to pray; He is teaching us the right attitudes in being a citizen of the kingdom. Here, He highlights surrender.

Jesus gives this petition in prayer by asking for God's Kingdom to come to earth. Every kingdom has a ruler. And in the case of the Kingdom of God, God the Father is the King.

Every kingdom has a king, and in the Kingdom of God, that King is Your Father.

If you remember, the Israelites really wanted a king. God gave them Saul, a king like all the other kings. They wanted to be like everyone else and have someone they could point to and say, *Look at our king.*

So Samuel passed on the Lord's warning to the people who were asking him for a king. "This is how a king will reign over you," Samuel said. "The king will draft your sons and assign them to his chariots and his charioteers, making them run before his chariots. Some will be generals and captains in his army, some will be forced to plow in his fields and harvest his crops, and some will make his weapons and chariot equipment. The king will take your daughters from you and force them to cook and bake and make perfumes for him. He will take away the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his own officials. He will take a tenth of your grain and your grape harvest and distribute it among his officers and attendants. He will take your male and female slaves and demand the finest of your cattle and donkeys for his own use. He will demand a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his slaves. When that day comes, you will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but then the Lord will not help you."

1 Samuel 8:10-18 (NLT)

It is not necessarily consistent to pray: *Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name, Now let's talk about my kingdom plan.*

If God is the King...He is...Then, He has a plan on how to rule and govern His kingdom.

Every kingdom has laws or rules that govern it.

Imagine being fined... for having a beard.

That's exactly what happened in 17th-century Russia under Tsar Peter the Great. After visiting Western Europe, Peter decided his people looked too "old-fashioned" with their traditional beards. So, in 1698, he introduced a **beard tax**. If you were a noble, merchant, or even just a commoner—not clergy or a peasant—you had to **pay for a license to keep your beard**. Pay up, and you'd get a medallion—a "beard token"—as proof. Forget to carry it? The police had orders to **shave you on the spot**.

Peter the Great taxed beards. You weren't even allowed to look the way you wanted without the king's approval. That's how kings roll. It isn't a negotiation; you just do what they tell you.

Every king has rules governing their kingdom, and God the Father is no different. His kingdom is marked by generosity, love, and also justice, and power.

What is the kingdom of God like? Well, Jesus described it like yeast in flour. Even though it starts by affecting only a small portion, it ultimately ends up spreading to everything. It works its way into your words, your time, your money, your relationships, and your priorities. It works its way across the world.

This kingdom is a present reality and a future hope.

So, how do we enter into this kingdom?

We don't wander into the kingdom of God. We have to be invited in. Jesus offered up His life so you could be invited.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 7:21 (NIV)

There is a right way to enter into the kingdom. It is not by mere words and saying you believe it. The true test of your citizenship in this kingdom is that your life has and is being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Christ saves you and changes you.

Another thing God's Kingdom is marked by is that...

2. Everyone's NEEDS are met.

(Matthew 6:11. C/R: Psalm 145: 15-16; Matthew 6:34)

"Give us today our daily bread."

Matthew 6:11 (NIV)

Jesus continues the Lord's prayer by instructing us to pray for daily provision.

God's kingdom is unique. The ultimate picture that God gives is that everyone in His kingdom has their needs met.

This seems so incredibly far-fetched to me, like a dream world.

Physical needs like food, shelter, and clothing. Emotional needs like belonging, safety, and love. Mental needs like rest, purpose, and peace. Spiritual needs like having a God worthy of our worship and time.

I mean, when I look around the world, it seems like the sky is always falling.

We are afraid of real things. Things like war, illness, and economic collapse. But then we also fear more things after discovering them online. Things like Microplastics.

There are plenty of things to be anxious about. Yet, Jesus urges us to set our sights on God meeting our needs for today.

Some of you are dreading next week's bills. Some of you might be worried about a difficult conversation. Some might be thinking if you are enough as a parent, a spouse, or even as a person.

Jesus is encouraging us: Ask for what you need today. Receive grace in this moment. He'll meet you where you are.

Jesus tells us later in this very sermon,

"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Matthew 6:34 (NLT)

Yet, we are enticed to get past today. We are trained to be anything other than present in the moment, sitting with what we need right now.

The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need it. When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.

Psalms 145:15-16 (NLT)

Do you believe that God wants to meet your needs? As both a Father and a King?

The Kingdom of God is also marked by...

3. FORGIVENESS and PROTECTION.

(Matthew 6:12-13. C/R: Proverbs 17:9; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13)

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Matthew 6:12 (NIV)

Debts. Jesus says to forgive us our debts. This leads us to believe that we owe God obedience. Obedience is demanded to our King, which means disobedience to his decrees puts us in debt.

Credit Card Debt. The average credit card debt in the state of SC is around \$6500. We all know how it feels when we pay something off. Imagine right now waking up and seeing your debt paid off—not refinanced or consolidated, but forgiven.

Jesus wants us to experience this freedom that comes from living a life without debts, both to God and withholding forgiveness from others.

The Scriptures are consistent. There seems to be this communal connection with forgiveness. We receive forgiveness and can offer it to others.

(Picture of a heart with a door) - If your heart is not open to give love, it is also not open to receive love.

Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.

Proverbs 17:9 (NLT)

Forgiveness is an essential element of the Kingdom of God. We enter into the kingdom through the forgiveness of our sins, and we live out the reality of that kingdom's impact in our lives by forgiving other people.

Our King not only grants us forgiveness of sins but also offers us protection.

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

Matthew 6:13 (NIV)

Some of your translations might say: *Deliver us from evil*. I think the Greek leans more to the evil one here.

We need God's help to overcome temptation in our lives. Temptation isn't just a bad habit. It's a spiritual weapon from the enemy to destroy your faith. It's not something to play with.

Jesus is not praying for us to be free from temptation. He is, in fact, praying that we would be given power from God to withstand any temptation.

As citizens of the kingdom, because our needs are fully met by our Father and King, we need no temptation should overtake us.

And God strengthens us through the temptation.

Close:

You can't pray; *Your kingdom come* and still want to wear the crown.

Who will get their way? Whose values shape your choices? Whose glory are you living for? Are you building into God's kingdom or living in your own?