

“Thy Kingdom Come”
Psalm 145
Acts 1:1-11

April 17, 2022 (Easter)

Q. 191. *What do we pray for in the second petition?*

A. In the second petition (which is, *Thy kingdom come*), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate; that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him forever: and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

The Larger Catechism says this very clearly.

When we pray, “thy kingdom come” – we pray that Satan’s kingdom would be destroyed.

How often do you pray against Satan’s kingdom?

You should!

Resist the devil and he will flee from you!

We also pray that the gospel would flourish and grow.

And that has lots of parts!

The Jews called – the fullness of the Gentiles brought in –

we pray that God would raise up pastors and elders and deacons –

we pray that the church be purged from corruption –

my own corruption – as well as others! –

We pray that the magistrate would be favorably disposed to us.

That helps!

We pray that the word, the sacraments, and prayer

would go forth – and by the grace of Christ,

that they would convert those who are dead in their sins –

and that they would build up and encourage those who are already converted.

We pray that Christ would rule in our hearts *here* – and *now*.

Don’t wait, LORD!

Please – don’t wait!

But then also, please do hasten!

Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

And that’s what we sing about in Psalm 145!

Sing Psalm 145A

Read Acts 1:1-11

When we pray, “thy kingdom come” – what do we mean?

Jesus taught his disciples to pray “thy kingdom come” –
and so when Jesus was raised from the dead,
the disciples knew that the resurrection was all about the coming of the Kingdom!

And so they ask him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

We’ve been praying for God’s kingdom for a couple years!
Isn’t it time yet?

Isn’t that so often the way we are?

We pray for something for a few weeks – a few months –
and if God doesn’t do it, we give up!

But how does Jesus answer them?

They are asking “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Jesus does not say “yes!”
Jesus does not say “no!”

Jesus says, in effect, you have misunderstood what my kingdom is all about!
You think that the coming of the kingdom
will result in the Son of David sitting on the throne of Israel.

Yes – but not in the way that you are thinking!
We talked about this when we went through the Nicene Creed.
If Jesus had been raised from the dead,
and then sat down on David’s throne in Jerusalem,
the last 2,000 years would have been a real mess.

Jesus would still be on earth.
That would be great for Israel!
Not so much for the rest of humanity...

Because if Jesus stays on earth, then he never sends the Holy Spirit –
and if the Holy Spirit never comes –
then it’s up to Jesus to do everything!
And King Jesus on the throne in Jerusalem would be a great king!
But you’ve watched that movie –
whether you pick Superman, Thor, or some other superhero,
humanity doesn’t like goodness nearly as much as we think we do!

So when the disciples ask if Jesus is going to restore the kingdom to Israel –

Jesus deflects:

“It is not for you to know times or seasons
that the Father has fixed by his own authority.
But (v8) you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,
and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

We see over and over throughout the scripture that humanity
does a *terrible job* of trying to establish the kingdom of God!

Only God can save.
Only when God acts in history does salvation come to his people!

But at the same time, how is Jesus going to restore his kingdom?
You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.
and you will be my witnesses.

The disciples are right:
Jesus is the one – the *only one* – who can restore the kingdom!
But now Jesus is teaching them that the kingdom only comes
through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son –
just as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father,
so also the Holy Spirit is in the Father and the Son!
And so when the Holy Spirit comes,
this is the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made,
when he said that “I will be with you always –
even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)

In the coming of the Holy Spirit, we see the coming of King Jesus to dwell with us!
And so, in a sense, *yes*, Jesus is now restoring the Kingdom to Israel!
Because the kingdom of Israel was itself a picture of the kingdom of God.
The throne of David was a picture of the heavenly throne.

God’s purpose in all of history was that a *man* would sit at God’s right hand.
One who shares our humanity now sits at the right hand of the Father!

The kingdom of God has indeed begun in Jesus –
and what I’m doing right now is announcing – and declaring –
exactly what Jesus told his disciples to do:

“you shall be my witnesses”

The book of Acts tells the story of how the apostles were those witnesses –
in Jerusalem (chapters 2-7)

in Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12)
and to the ends of the earth (chapters 13-28).

And then the story continues –
because the same one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church
continues to proclaim the same message!

Christ is risen!
[he is risen indeed!]

And because Christ is risen from the dead –
because the eternal Son of God has taken our flesh and joined himself to our humanity,
therefore one who is true God and true man sits at the right hand of the Father!

The King is sitting at the right hand of God.
The kingdom of God has come!
Therefore, repent and believe the Gospel –
believe the good news that Jesus has died for our sins –
and that he was raised again for our justification!

And therefore we *pray* for the coming of his kingdom!

The Heidelberg Catechism puts it this way:

123. Q. What is the second petition?

A. Thy kingdom come. That is: So rule us by Your Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to You. Preserve and increase Your church. Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against You, and every conspiracy against Your holy Word. Do all this until the fulness of Your kingdom comes, wherein You shall be all in all.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come...”

I’ve been encouraging you to use the Psalms and other biblical prayers
in order to help us learn how to pray better.

If you want to pray “thy kingdom come”
praying Psalm 145 is a good place to start.

Psalm 145 speaks of God’s kingdom three times in verses 11-13,
and addresses God as King in verse 1.

But what does Psalm 145 teach us about what it means to pray,
“Thy kingdom come”?

We saw last time that we learn about who God is from what he has done.

Psalm 111 taught us that the study of history –
and particularly of what God has done in history –
teaching us both what we are to believe concerning God (our theology)
and what duty God requires of us (our ethics).

Psalm 145 also begins with the holiness of God's name.

*I will extol you, my God and my King,
and bless **your name** forever and ever.
Every day I will bless you
and praise **your name** forever and ever.*

And only then, in verse three, does David then actually *use* the name of Yahweh:
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

And then in verses 4-7, David says that not only will he praise the LORD,
but also future generations.

*One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.*

Sometimes, when we are in secret, we pray alone.

But there is another sense in which we never pray alone!
We always pray *our* Father!

How should one generation commend God's works to another?

Just look at verses 5-7.

The "I" is one generation – the "they" is the other:

*On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.
They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

Listen to this variety of ways that David attests to the works of God:

Your works, your mighty acts, the glorious splendor of your majesty,
your wondrous works, the might of your awesome deeds, your greatness,
the fame of your abundant goodness, your righteousness.

When I compare this rich vocabulary of praise to my own,
I realize that the problem is one of laziness.

I do not take the time to pray as I ought.

I pick a few themes and stick with them

But David reflects on the glory of the kingdom of God and declares his praise to his King.

But what is the kingdom of God?

The Promise of the Kingdom can be found in Genesis,
but the Presence of Kingdom only begins when God takes a people for himself
and rules them.

God said to Pharaoh,

“Israel is my son, my firstborn, let my son go that he may worship me.”

The son of God cannot rule as God’s vicegerent as long as he is a slave.

And so it is at Sinai that God said to Israel,

“you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.”

And David reflects on this when he remembers what God revealed to Moses at Sinai:

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made. (v8-9)

This, you might say, is the central affirmation of God’s kingdom.

It was originally stated in the context of Israel’s rebellion.

Israel had sinned at Mt. Sinai, by making a golden calf.

And not only had Israel made an egregious theological error,
but their practice, both liturgical and moral, followed.

Idolatry and adultery were both rooted in their failure to worship God.

When you lose sight of who God is –

the result is that our worship goes awry –

we are worshipers – so we *will* worship something!

And when we worship the creature rather than the Creator –

then our loves are all out of whack,

and so we start to seek satisfaction in things that cannot satisfy.

You have made us for yourself, O Lord,

and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. (Augustine)

And yet the LORD is gracious and merciful.

He did not destroy Israel, but listened to the voice of Moses,

and when he caused his glory to pass by Moses,

he declared these words:

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The kingdom of God is founded upon that statement.

Our King is just – but he is also merciful,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.

And so David sings (v10),

*All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your saints shall bless you!*

*They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,
to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. (v10-12)*

The language of verses 4-7 echoes through the remainder of the Psalm.

It can be a useful practice for you in your prayers.

Pick a theme – like God’s mighty deeds, the glorious splendor of his kingdom!

And weave that theme throughout your prayer,

praising him and magnifying his holy name at first –

and then praying that God’s glorious kingdom

would indeed be made splendid in us –

and that we might make known to our children God’s mighty deeds.

In Psalm 145 David weaves together the theme of God’s kingdom

(which has a very definite Israel-centered focus)

with the theme of God’s universal dominion

(which of course is the point of an Israel *centered* focus.

Israel is the center – but the center of what?

God’s universal dominion!)

The kingdom of God, after all, is not primarily a territorial designation.

The United States refers to a territorial entity.

But the Kingdom of God is not a territory.

Rather, it refers to the reign and rule of God.

David confesses that the kingdom of Yahweh is an everlasting kingdom.

Israel was supposed to be the place where the Kingdom of God *began* to take shape.

As we’ve gone through the book of Joshua in the evening service,
we have seen how Joshua’s entrance into the Promised Land
signaled the coming of the Kingdom.

And now, in the book of Judges, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the judges
signaled the coming of the Kingdom, as God restored his people.

But the OT is very clear that God’s kingdom was not restricted to Israel!

David’s son understood this well.

In 2 Chronicles 6, at the dedication of the temple,

Solomon spoke of the establishment of the kingdom.
The LORD has fulfilled with his hand what he spoke with his mouth
in establishing the son of David on the throne,
and establishing a house for his name in Jerusalem.

Land and Seed have come together in Solomon's day,
as the promise of the Land as a place where God meets with his people
has been focused upon this one house
and the promise of the Seed has been focused upon this one man.

But Solomon understands that all of this is a type and a shadow.
He sees that while the kingdom has come – he sits on his father's throne –
he still must pray *for* the kingdom *to* come,
*Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father
what you have promised him, saying*
*'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel,
if only your sons pay close attention to their way...' (6:16)*

And so Solomon prays, “thy kingdom come!”

In Solomon's day, “thy kingdom come” is captured in the petitions of his prayer:
*Will God indeed dwell with man on the earth?
Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you,
how much less this house that I have built!
Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God,
listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you,
that your eyes may be open day and night toward this house,
the place where you have promised to set your name,
that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place.*

And then Solomon prayer takes all of the situations and possibilities of life
and brings them before God's heavenly throne.

Solomon's prayer provides a kingdom perspective on life.
It may be that one man sins against his neighbor (v22-23)
or it may be that Israel is defeated by their enemies (v24-25)
It may be a drought, famine, or pestilence (v26-31),
but whatever is the case,
the answer will be found at God's throne in heaven.

Now do you understand why Jesus said in Acts 1
that the apostles had missed the point of the kingdom?!

Will you now restore the kingdom *to Israel*?

Solomon would never have asked that question!

Solomon understood that God's kingdom only comes in its fulness
when David's son sits at God's right hand!

It is when God hears from heaven that he brings resolution to all earth's woes.

Do you believe that?

I know that we say we believe that,
but what does your prayer life say?

But before you get too discouraged, let me point something out.

Have you ever noticed that Solomon's prayer is focused on himself?

His first petition is *not* that God will hear "his servants" (plural)
but "his servant" (singular) – Solomon, or better, the Son of David.

O God, hear the Son of David when he prays toward this place.

Praying toward the temple is important.

Think of it this way:

God dwells in heaven,
but he has promised to hear prayers that are made "toward this place."

Whose prayers?

The prayers of the Son of David.

The prayers of the anointed King (remember that the Hebrew word for anointed
is *meshiach* – which, translated into Greek is Christ.)

So Solomon prays that God will hear the prayers of the people

insofar as they pray in and with their anointed King – in Christ –

as verse 21 says, "and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place."

Israel had failed to live as the kingdom of God.

And so God called David to succeed where Israel failed.

If the Davidic kings are faithful, then God's blessing will come upon Israel.

But you may already know the story!

How did they do?

Not so good...

And so a thousand years later,

when John the Baptist declares, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

he is announcing that everything promised to Israel in the OT is about to happen.

The universal reign of Yahweh is at hand.

And the coming of the kingdom is seen in its full light as "the coming of God himself as king."

And this is what happens when Jesus announces that the kingdom of God is in your midst

The King himself has come.

And now God has raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand.
We're not talking about an earthly shadow anymore.
The Son of David is now sitting at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly temple.

This means above all else, that God will hear Jesus when Jesus prays on your behalf.
This is no excuse for our lousy practice of prayer!
But it is a great comfort that we have an Advocate with the Father,
even Jesus Christ the righteous.

But it also means that we have no need of praying toward an earthly temple.
Indeed, if we would face Jerusalem when we pray,
then we should lift up our eyes unto heaven,
because Paul tells us that the Jerusalem above – she is our mother!
We lift up our eyes to the heavenly Jerusalem,
where the Son of David now sits in glory at the right hand of the Father,
and we pray toward that heavenly temple with full confidence!

But in that light –
in the light of the King who has come,
let's go back and finish Psalm 145,
the Psalm of the Kingdom.

David has just declared that God's kingdom
is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

But in light of the fact that Jesus is the one who brings this glorious and everlasting kingdom,
think of the ministry of Jesus as you listen to Psalm 145:14ff

The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down (think of how he heals the sick).
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season (give us this day our daily bread).
You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing (he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords).
The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.

And what is more,
The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
(those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth)
He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.
(come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden...)

*The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.
(depart from me, I never knew you...)*

*My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.*

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