

# Calling Down the Kingdom

By Don Green

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**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, for far too long, we have been conditioned to think wrongly about prayer and for far too long we have prayed wrongly and in a misguided way that is not in keeping with the manner in which Christ would have us to pray. We have inherited an unbiblical and man-centered approach to prayer, most of us have; we repeat rote words from memory that do not engage our hearts, perhaps we do not even really seriously pray as a meaningful part of our life at all, or we follow and find ourselves in bondage to non-biblical rules that others have imposed upon us. You can see this quite easily on the eve of an election, we ask for our candidate to win. In trials, we ask for our circumstances to change and be more to our liking. You could multiply that by a thousand different examples, I won't do that today, the point being is that we seek prayer to manipulate what happens in this life to our liking; to make life more like what we want it to be; to make life on this earth more of what we would want it to be, and in doing so we have completely missed the point. We have completely missed the point. We are climbing a ladder of prayer not realizing that we've put it against the wrong wall.

Human issues, beloved, here's the key to praying well and praying better and praying in accordance with what Christ has taught us in the Lord's prayer that we've been studying in Matthew 6. You must understand this fundamental starting point: human issues of this life are secondary to the eternal purpose of God. God is more important than man, and eternity is more important than time, and heaven is more important than earth. Unless you start prayer from that fundamental starting point and that fundamental perspective, your praying is going to be amiss, it is going to be wrongly conceived and therefore wrongly directed.

We do not properly begin to pray until we grasp that central fact and this transcends the words that you use in prayer, it transcends any particular individual prayer. Beloved, what this does is this goes to the very core of what your affections are, what your aspirations are, what it is that you anticipate and most want out of life. Think about it this way: we have opportunity, we are invited to the throne of grace by a holy God to pray and to seek him. What a great privilege that is that our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for us, and the question is what are you as a believer in Christ, what are you going to use that privilege in order to advance? What is it that you are going to seek? What is it that you want in prayer? And it is only when you step back and say there must be something more than this life that is at stake here, only when you begin to ask that question, only

when you begin to interact with those matters do you find they can begin to address the right things in prayer.

Look, let's think about it this way: you really wouldn't need to be a Christian, would you, to want God to do things your way. You wouldn't need to be a Christian to pray and ask for things to go the way that you want them to go in life. There is nothing uniquely Christian about that at all, is there? You could be a completely self-centered, egotistical, man of the world with no thought of the Spirit of God dwelling within you and want a higher power to exercise his influence to make things go the way that you want. There is nothing Christian about that. There is nothing godly about that to simply want things to go your way, it could be nothing more than an overflow of a selfish unbelieving heart. What is it, then, that distinguishes the prayer of the disciple of Christ, what is it that makes it different, and what is it that makes it distinct from the praying that any man of the world could do? Well, to start that, to start to answer that question, we should say ask the most basic of questions: what did Jesus say? What did Jesus say about the nature of prayer? What did Jesus say should be the pattern of prayer that his disciples would follow?

Now look, I like to see these things. I want you to understand that I am speaking to support you, I'm speaking to help you, not to scold you or anything like that, but we must be clear on the fact that we have inherited a bad tradition of prayer from the different streams of religious tradition that are represented in this room. We have to recognize that something is wrong so that we know enough to forsake it and to take a new approach that is in keeping with the teaching of Christ.

Jesus teaches us how to pray in Matthew 6, beginning in verse 9. Look at it with me for that's where we are returning here this morning. Matthew 6:9, Jesus said,

9 Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'

Now, I understand that those words are familiar to us. You can come from liturgical backgrounds and memorize those prayers as a young child and so the words themselves are familiar but the question is has the meaning and significance of them buried their way into their hearts so that it affects what we want out of prayer and what we ask for in prayer. Last time we saw that Jesus says when he says, "Pray, then, in this way, 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name,'" and we considered the fact that from extensive broad biblical testimony the glory of God is the purpose of salvation and the glory of God is the purpose of your Christian life. The individual circumstances that you face are secondary to the greater overriding purpose that God would be glorified through those. You were saved in order to bring glory to God and therefore the circumstances that he gives you are not so much that you would figure out a way to manipulate him to make

them what you would like them to be, rather in your circumstances you say, "God, what I really want is for you to be glorified here. That is the most important thing to me. Everything else is secondary to that. Hallowed be your name." We seek for glory of God as the preeminent priority in prayer. That's what Jesus taught us in verse 9.

Now, as we proceed here and go on in verse 10, we're going to see that Jesus expands on this God-centered approach in prayer and calls upon us to desire, you might say, the work of God in prayer. We've said, "Hallowed be your name. Let all men see the glory of your character. May your name honored within the halls of my own heart, O God. May your name be glorified. That's what matters most to me." And from that perspective, we go further and say, "God, what I really want is for your work to be done. I want to see your purposes advanced." In other words, beloved, you could think about it this way: that you should begin to think more and more about prayer being the opportunity for you to seek the advance of God's purposes in his plan rather than seeking the advance of your desires and what your purposes in your own individual life are. You must understand that prayer is something transcendent. Your God is transcendent. His purposes are transcendent and therefore when you enter into his presence, those transcendent purposes are to saturate your mind and thinking so that it comes out in what you desire God to do. This is very foreign to the natural mind.

Look at what Jesus says in verse 10. We're just going to look at the three words in English here in our hour together here this morning, when Jesus says, "Your kingdom come." He starts out saying, "Our Father who is in heaven. God, you are good. God, you are great. I trust you. I'm confident in you therefore I come in prayer. What I want, Father, is to see your name exalted and glorified." Then we come into the next step of prayer as Jesus teaches it, "Your kingdom come." In other words, we don't simply recite this prayer and go through it as a kind of a shallow shell of things and get on to what we really want, what this is doing, beloved, what Jesus is doing here in these words is he is confronting the very deepest aspirations of your heart, the very deepest things that you desire and what you want out of life, what you want out of prayer, what you want to see happen. This is revolutionary and completely transforming and unless you elevate your expectations to that level with what Jesus is saying here, you're most likely going to horribly miss the point. But when we take to mind the fact that Jesus is teaching for keeps, Jesus is teaching at an elevated level as the eternal Son of God, then we say, "Maybe he's aiming at something that totally transcends this world," and he is, but if he's aiming at something that totally transcends this world, then our aspirations in prayer and our affections in prayer are raised to another level that you would not naturally go to as you walk about and as you walk by sight and not by faith. So by the help of the Holy Spirit we want to bring these things to you, to your mind today, and trust that God would change us all into people whose prayers matter to him.

What you want out of your prayer life is this, what you should want: you should not want your will to be prevalent; you should not want preeminently that what you want in life would be done. That is not Christian praying, that's just being selfish. What you should want preeminently is the glory of God and the purposes of God to be advanced and that's what Jesus teaches us here. And to start with that, you must remember this, you must

have a high view of God if you're going to pray to him appropriately and a high view of God can start here with what I'm about to say. God is orchestrating human history in order to accomplish the plan that he established before the foundation of the world. That's the kingdom purpose of God. That's the desire of God. That's the decree of God. That's what God is doing. He has a comprehensive plan for everything that ever happens and the whole design of this is to bring glory to his name and glory to his Son Jesus Christ. Now, that being true, then your responsibility and your opportunity in prayer is to tap your desires into what God is doing so that you would get with the system, so that you would get with the flow, that you would get with the program of what God is doing. That's what Christ is teaching us here.

I repeat myself a lot. That's okay. But you see, beloved, the purpose, your purpose in prayer is not to get God plugged in with what you're plan is what you want. That is a total reversal of the order of the universe. Your purpose in prayer is to tap yourself into what God is doing and to get with him and what he's doing rather than the other way around. This is radically different than what we're usually taught to think and speak in prayer. Christ in the simplicity of brief sentences and brief commands shows us this in ways that are undeniable.

What is it that you should seek in prayer? You should seek the kingdom purposes of God in prayer. In other words, in prayer you should think about it this way with Matthew 6:10, "Your kingdom come," in mind, you should think about it that what you want to do in prayer is you want to call down the kingdom, that life on earth is secondary to you and what you want is you want the kingdom to come down, that God's purposes would be fulfilled because as God's purposes are fulfilled, he will be glorified and in his glorification you find the fulfillment of the deepest aspirations of your heart. It should be the heart desire of every true Christian that the greatest thing would be that the name of God and the purpose of God would be fulfilled because, after all, it is that God in the Lord Jesus Christ who rescued your soul from eternal damnation, and because of the great gift of grace that he has given to you, nothing matters by comparison except that everyone would know to the furthest extent possible how great this God is who dealt with you so mercifully in your sin. That is the framework that will help you to pray rightly.

What are the kingdom purposes of God in prayer? I'm going to give you two things to hang your thoughts on here today. When Jesus says, "Your kingdom come," what is it that you should be thinking about and desiring in your heart? Point 1: remember the return of Christ. Remember the return of Christ.

What does Scripture teach us about this world except that it is temporary? 1 John 2 says the world is passing away and also its lusts. Well, if you're praying to an eternal God, why would you focus all of your energy on that which is temporary and passing away? Shouldn't prayer be something that is more transcendent than that which is going to die with the end of this age? Christ teaches us something different here, something different in Scripture, and what we need to go back to, what we need to remember is that the teaching of Scripture is that this world is temporary, in fact, there is a much greater event coming that is going to dwarf and swallow up everything that has ever happened in the

course of world history, something great and magnificent and majestic is just about to occur on the timeline of God that will make everything in this world seem trivial and trite and passing and forgettable by comparison, and that great event is this: is that Jesus Christ is coming again. Jesus Christ is going to return to earth and what we want to see here today, we're going to talk about this in the broadest of terms and not get into detail plans of eschatology or systems or all of that, but to simply look at Scripture sort of in a way like we did last week. What we did last week was we looked at a number of passages that proclaimed to us the importance of the glory of God, that that is the purpose of everything was the glory of God, well, what I want to do to help expand your thinking about prayer and what Christ is saying when he says, "Your kingdom come," is to see the broad and the deep and the multiplied times that Jesus in Scripture emphasized the fact that he is coming again; that Jesus Christ, that the world as we know it is not going to continue indefinitely; that there is a set time limit on that that will come to an end when Jesus Christ comes visibly from heaven and intervenes to establish his kingdom.

Christ made it obvious and said repeatedly that this is exactly what he's going to do. Look at John 14 with and now we're just going to survey some passages all too quickly that change our sense of anticipation and expectation about what the future holds. John 14, Jesus speaking words that bring comfort even in the midst of this immediate day, for some of you. In John 14:1, what did Christ say? "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Christ in this crucial passage says, "Don't let your heart be troubled." He's speaking to his disciples knowing that he is preparing them for his imminent crucifixion, but in like manner speaking his word to you in the midst of your sorrows here today, "Don't let your heart be troubled. This is passing. This is temporary. I have an overarching plan that I am working out and it is tied to this," he says to his disciples, "I am going to come again. Yes," in that first century context he says, "Yes, I'm going to be leaving soon. I'm going to go to the cross. I'm going to be received up into heaven and I will no longer be with you in my physical body. I will no longer be with you physically," he says, "but don't let that trouble you. Don't let that throw you off. What you need to remember, what's core to the understanding," he says, "of comfort and of expectation is, I'll come again." And all of a sudden with those simple words, our entire existence in this earthly age is put into perspective. This is a parenthesis of time before we get to the good stuff. This is a temporary passing matter before the greater purposes of God are instituted by Christ when he comes again. You must understand this. You cannot begin properly to pray to God until you understand that this life is really not the ultimate purpose. Jesus says, "I'll come again."

Look at verse 18 of John 14. he says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." In other words, "I'm not going to abandon my people to this world forever. I'll come again." In verse 28 of John 14, he said, "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." There is a greater purpose involved than simply staying with the disciples on earth. Jesus says, "I'm going to come again." He said it just

in this chapter, he said it not once, not twice, he said it three times. This is apparently supposed to be an anchor to our expectations. This is supposed to be an anchor to that which we desire and want and expect out of life.

Now beloved, speaking to those of you who are true Christians here today, somewhere deep in your heart would be a recognition once it's called out, once it's beckoned to come forth to the front of your mind, is that you love Christ more than you love life itself, right? Heaven and earth will pass away, Christ says, my words will not pass away. We love Christ more than ourselves. Jesus said if any man wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow after me. Self is left behind. This world is left behind when a man truly comes to Christ and Christ becomes the supreme and really in one sense, the only ambition of the true Christian life, the true Christian heart, so that what you want most is Christ, everything else is secondary. What you most love is Christ, everything else is secondary. And when you have a sense that Christ is going to come again, whatever that looks like, whatever that means, whatever the timing of it is, that somehow Christ is going to return, then beloved, that becomes that which you most eagerly anticipate above everything else. That becomes the most precious thought that Christ is going to come again and you say within your heart, "I cannot wait for that to come because when Christ comes, then things are going to be made right. When Christ comes, my King is going to be honored as he properly should. When Christ comes, I'm going to be set free from the machinations of this evil wicked world system and things will be right once again in a way that they haven't been since Eden. That's what I want. That's what I'm looking forward to," you say to yourself. And do you realize how lofty and noble and great that is? How infinitely worthy that is? And then compare it to the way that we have been taught and we are so accustomed to praying, "Lord, help me through this day. Lord, help me with my hurt toe. Lord, help me get the job I want. Lord, help me get the person I want. Lord, I want, I want, I want." And when you put those two things side-by-side, all of a sudden you want to shed that selfish way of thinking and praying because it is consumed and transcended by the glory of the thought that Christ is coming again.

Well, John 14 isn't the only place that Scripture speaks of this. Look at Acts 1. As you're turning there, let these three words sink into your mind: anticipation, affection and aspiration. What is it that you're looking forward to in anticipation? What is it that you most want to see if anything could be done, what is it that you would want, what do you anticipate? Affection, what is it that you most love? What is it that you most care about? Aspirations, what is it that you most desire to see? Affection and aspiration and anticipation. Well, don't you see, beloved, for us it's all bound up in the return of Christ. It's all bound up in the person of Christ.

Let me step back and say this. Let's make an assumption together here. The assumption that we make is that the things that we most care about are going to come out when we pray to God. The things that we most want and we most desire are going to come and is shown in what we ask for, what it is that we want, what do we take our opportunity of prayer and how do we use that. Well, what's most important to us is what's going to come out of our lips at that time because ever supremely Jesus said, "The mouth speaks from

that which fills the heart and a heart that is filled with an anticipation, an affection and an aspiration for the return of Christ, somehow that's going to bleed over profusely into prayer.

In Acts 1, Jesus had given his final words to his disciples and in verse 9 it says, "after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.'" He'll come again. The disciples were told that at the exact pivot point of his ascension and while they're still looking up, speaking metaphorically, the remaining mist of his departure and the angel says, "Why are you doing that? He's going to come again." And Scripture repeatedly points us to the return of Christ.

I'm only illustrating with some passages now. 1 Thessalonians 1. Turn further back into your New Testament to 1 Thessalonians 1. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and then 1 Thessalonians. This is central to what it means to be a Christian. 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul is talking about the conversion of those at Thessalonica. He is commending them and he says in chapter 1, verse 9, "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God." A lot of people would just stop there as if it were only about this life. No. Paul's sentence doesn't end there. Verse 10, "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." He says embedded in a notion of true Christianity is repentance, yes, leaving false gods behind and turning to the true and living God, yes, absolutely. that is central to true saving faith and, he says, to wait for the return of Christ. To wait for his Son from heaven. This is what it means to be a true Christian is that we have turned from sin in order to embrace Christ and joined together with that is an expectation and a desire and a hope that Christ is coming again.

Paul goes on and defines that further in the same book, in chapter 4, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, he says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again," I'm right there with you. I believe that, don't you? I believe that Christ died and rose again, that he died and rose again for my justification. Praise God for a full salvation! But there's more than that. It's in addition to that. "Even so," he says in verse 14, "God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord," he's coming again, "will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." Christ is coming again. Christ is coming in the clouds of heaven and we will be raised up to be with him. That is what you've ultimately been saved for. That transcends this world. That is what we aspire for. That is

transcendent. That is to inform the way that you pray. That is to inform what it is that you desire before the throne of God.

Look over now at 2 Peter 3, and again I emphasize, I'm just giving you some representative passages this way. We said earlier that this world is temporary and therefore that influences the way that we pray; that we are not bound up in matters that are purely temporal and passing in prayer but we seek transcendence in it. Verse 11 of 2 Peter 3, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way," verse 10 said they are going to be destroyed with intense heat, the earth and its works will be burned up, so verse 11 he says, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." There is a coming day when this world will be set aside. There is a coming time where life as we know it will be put out of existence in order to usher in something new. "The coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" Verse 13, "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." What are we looking for? What are we eagerly anticipating? What is it that burns in our heart that we really want? We want that new kingdom to come. This sinful world system that is dedicated to rebellion against God and ingratitude and denial of him, we want this world to go away so that Christ could be honored and glorified when a new kingdom is established and Christ rightly receives the glory that is his due. When we belong to him as King and he is glorified and not denied as the prevailing sentiment, that's what we want because we love him, because he's so great, because he has been so good to us. We look for and eagerly desire the coming of Christ.

Beloved, let's put it this way: to be a Christian means that you know Christ as your King. Look at the world around you, look at the system in which you live, is Christ presently recognized by all as King? Do men love him and revere him and submit to him as they should? To ask the question is to answer it, isn't it? And you say in your heart, you look at this with an affection toward Christ and aspirations of him and you say, "Do you know what? This isn't right. This isn't good. The King is not honored. My King is not honored. Christ the lovely one, Christ the Ruler of all, Christ the blessed Son of God is not recognized and honored as King. I can't bear it, God, your kingdom come!" And Scripture would tell you, my friends that know Christ, that when Christ comes it's going to be far better than what we know now. This will be things the way they were appointed to be.

So in light of that, we come to a conclusion that Scripture helps us to recognize. Turn over to Philippians 3. What we see is that this world is not our home and in chapter 3, verse 20 of the book of Philippians, Paul says, "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." We are eagerly waiting for something that is yet to come and we are waiting for Christ to come and what is he going to do? Verse 21, he "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." We eagerly wait for this. This is what God has appointed. This is what is about to happen. Christ is going to come and that will be so magnificent and wonderful. It will



swallow up everything about this world, everything about this life, every trial you could ever imagine or have ever faced is all going to be swallowed up into insignificance by the surpassing glory of the return of Christ.

If you're a Christian, who wouldn't want that? That will be splendid. That will be magnificent. That will be glory. And that's why Jesus teaches us to pray, "Father, your kingdom come. God, I understand that Christ is coming again. I realize that I'm living in a parenthesis of an evil world system that rebels against you and I feel out of place here. Father, I feel the weakness of my own flesh. I feel the weakness of trials and tribulations and I groan under it all, Lord. I groan in my own circumstances, I groan in this world system, but preeminently I groan because creation, this world in which I live, does not honor and glorify you the way that you deserve. And Father, I am discontent with that state of affairs and so I urgently pray, Lord, your kingdom come. I prefer you to this life. I prefer the kingdom of Christ to this kingdom of darkness. So, Lord, your kingdom come." The meaning of the prayer is, "God, use your power to introduce your kingdom from above. God, you have promised the return of Christ, that's what I'm asking for. In keeping with what Scripture testifies to again and again and again, God, I just say that's what I want too. I want what you have promised to become reality in time."

And God will keep that promise when Christ reigns on the earth. Look at Revelation 20. This coming future time when Christ reigns on the earth, Revelation 20:4, the Apostle John giving us the content of the vision that he saw about events still future to our time. He says, "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." His kingdom. "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed." His kingdom. "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years." His kingdom. His kingdom. His kingdom. His kingdom.

Now beloved, let me say this: the idea of praying, "God, Your kingdom come," is not designed for God to do it sooner or quicker than what he established as his plan before the beginning of time. God will work these things out on his timetable. The point of this, the point of praying this way is not for you to get God to change his perfect plan in accordance with you, it's to condition your heart. It's so that your heart would be aligned with the kingdom purposes of God and say, "God, what I want is your purposes. You've said your kingdom is coming, God, I pray, bring it. God, just bring it. That's my desire in prayer. Your kingdom come."

And how important is this prayer of the return of Christ? Maybe you've never thought about it this way. We have a Bible, right? We have 66 books of revelation, no more, no less. Sixty-six books, all of this immense self-disclosure from God. The Old Testament recording the history of God and his work in the people, the New Testament recording

the ministry of Christ and then the apostolic letters giving us an interpretation of that, Revelation telling us what to expect in the future. We have this broad sweep of history, magnificent revelation from God, and what is the concluding sentiment of all of that revelation that was imparted to mankind over 1,500 years, 40 different authors, 66 English books? What's the final note of God's revelation? Look at Revelation 22:20. What is all of this revelation supposed to leave us with? Revelation 22:20, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." The Bible ends on this note of expectation of the return of Christ and the prayer that he would come and do so quickly. That's where the Bible ends is on this note of the expectation of the return of Christ. This is central to Christianity.

Beloved, that is your hope and that manifests itself in the way that you pray. "God, I desire your kingdom more than I desire life itself. Come soon. Send Christ. Establish his kingdom. Lord, that's what I want more than anything. That's my aspiration, that's my affection, that's what I'm aiming for in all of life." And that defining hope has a defining impact on the way that you pray. You ask for it. You show God. You manifest before God alone in the privacy of your own prayers what it is that you most treasure, what it is that you most want and, "God, what I most want, I want Christ to come again." And Jesus sets that as a greater priority in prayer than the provision of your daily bread just by the sequence with which he sought it and taught it.

So you remember the return of Christ in prayer and you let that shape what it is that you seek and what it is that you commune with God over and all of a sudden, I'll make the same point again, all of a sudden the idea of saying, "I've got to pray 45 minutes and I've got this long prayer list that I have to do in order for God to be satisfied with me," all of that stuff looks as cheap and superficial as it really is. You cannot put these two things side-by-side, that mechanical approach to praying versus the glory and return of Christ, you cannot put them side-by-side and think that they are equal partners in true prayer. They're not. Christ is teaching us what our heart desires, what we most want out of life, what the aim of our existence is, and the aim of our existence is to see the return of our King.

So there is one other aspect that we can say about this, "Thy kingdom come," perhaps a secondary application to what Christ was teaching but go back to Matthew 6 for just a moment. Matthew 6, Jesus says, "Thy kingdom come," in chapter 6, verse 10, and as a second application of that prayer, beloved, I would encourage you to remember the rescue of souls. Remember the rescue of souls. We said remember the return of Christ, secondly, remember the rescue of souls because Scripture speaks about the kingdom of God in another way as well. The kingdom of God is that realm where God reigns as King over those who have repented and believed in Christ and, "Your kingdom come," reminds us to pray evangelistically, to pray for the salvation of those who do not know Christ.

In Colossians 1:13, you can listen as I read, the Apostle Paul said this, "He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." There is a sense in which we are in

the kingdom of Christ already as he reigns over us as Lord, as our sins have been forgiven, we have been transferred from the domain of Satan and into the kingdom of Christ where Christ reigns rather than being under the domination of Satan. And in, "Your kingdom come," we pray, "Christ, expand your reign over more in a saving way." This prayer is saying, "Lord, there are souls that I know that are still under the lordship of Satan. God, they are slaves to an evil taskmaster. They are slaves to their own sin and they are in danger, O God. God, I pray that you would bring them into your kingdom just like you brought me into your kingdom as well. You graciously saved me from the domain of Satan and put me under the gracious headship of Christ. O God, I pray that you would bring others in, bring these loved ones in. Father, extend your kingdom over them as well." Paul prayed that way for his fellow Jews, didn't he? Romans 10:1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."

And so you think this way, you approach life this way: you look around your life and in your circle of influence, you look at your family, you look at your friends, you look at your neighbors, and you see lost men. You see men who are hostile to the Gospel, hostile to Christ, and rather than being angry with them, rather than hating them or any other human reaction, you look at these lost people that are in your realm of love, your realm of relationship, your realm of influence, you look at those lost people and you say, "O God, let your kingdom come. Have your kingdom burst upon them as well because they need to be saved." You pray, "God, bring them into your kingdom also." You say, "God, promote your glory through your grace in salvation in their lives rather than in their eternal judgment. God, I ask for your glory to be manifested by bringing others into the kingdom."

And all of a sudden and we could say this, I don't think it's too much to say this, beloved, I'll ask it in the form of a question: isn't the eternal salvation of a soul, of an eternal soul, isn't that more pressing than any other issue that we might face in our earthly temporal lives? Isn't that what we should supremely be seeking for those who are lost rather than praying for their earthly well-being or prosperity? "God, whatever it takes, bring them into your kingdom. And God, I have these needs in my own life, O God, but that's really secondary to the fact that eternal souls are at stake. God, I seek your kingdom to spread its wings over them."

It's when we think about prayer from this perspective, my beloved friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, that we see how shallow our praying so often is. Let that convict us to change us because as we seek the return of Christ and as we seek the rescue of souls in prayer, we will be praying in perfect concord, in perfect concert with the purposes of God. We can obey Christ in what he has taught us to pray and find a greater significance in prayer than we have ever known before, where we are not keeping track and keeping score of what we do but we are consumed and transformed by the greater purposes of God. So I ask you, beloved, will you forsake your man-centered approach to praying and embrace the glory and the kingdom of God as your overarching purpose when you approach the throne of grace?

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Our dear God, glorify your name by whatever means you deem best. Let your name be hallowed among the saved and the unredeemed alike, and as you do that, Father, we seek your kingdom. We long especially as Scripture has refreshed our minds, refreshed our memory about the ultimate purpose and the timetable of God, that Christ is coming again. God, we cannot wait for that. We pray that you would send Christ back and overturn this wicked system that Christ might reign as King and receive the glory of which he is so preeminently worthy. And Father, we recognize that you delay that day for a time so that there might be an ingathering of others who have yet to repent and so we pray for the coming of your kingdom among the lost as well. Even in this room, Father, we pray for your kingdom to come upon the still stony rebellious hearts of those who have refused to believe. Father, may your Spirit work in their hearts to convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment; to turn their cold and stubborn will toward a warm and fleshly desire, fleshly in the sense of responsive to Christ, that they might repent of sin and believe in Christ for their eternal salvation. So Father, we pray, "Your kingdom come," as we close this time in Christ's name. Amen.*

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