

Prayer and Passion: “*Thy Kingdom Come*”

Dear Friends in Christ,

Every time I pray the Lord’s Prayer and come to the petition, “*Thy kingdom come*” or “*Thy will be done,*” there is a tension in my heart – a struggle – a skirmish with what I’m praying and what I know to be true! In fact, it’s more than a skirmish – it’s a battle - it’s Armageddon – it’s a raging war – an internal conflict that just won’t go away no matter how hard I pray! “**YOUR** *kingdom come, Lord,*” not **MINE**? “**YOUR** *will be done, Lord,*” not **MINE**? Come on, people of God; let’s be honest in this penitential season of Lent! Don’t you really want God to do it **YOUR** way? Don’t I really want God to do it **MY** way?

It’s kind of like that little poem which I committed to memory years ago:

*I had a little tea party this afternoon at three,
Twas very small, three guests in all,
Just I, MYSELF and ME;
MYSELF ate all the sandwiches,
while I drank up the tea
Twas also I who ate the pie
and passed the cake to ME!*

And yet I - you - have the audacity to pray, “*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by **THY** name, **THY** kingdom come!*” (Matthew 6:9-10a) **Your** kingdom, Lord – not **mine!**

Dr. Martin Luther explains *The Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer* in this way, from The Small Catechism. Say it with me. (*Page 5 in your service folder.*)

“Thy kingdom come.”

What does this mean?

The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God’s kingdom come?

God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Luther’s Small Catechism, © 1986, Concordia Publishing House, Used by permission

So, what’s so difficult then about praying this petition? God is God, and in one sense the Lord doesn’t need us one twit to make “*His kingdom come!*” He’s the Sovereign Lord, the King of Kings, the Ruler of the Universe, as the Psalmist declares: “*The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*” (Psalm 103:19) We Lutherans like to talk about God’s three-fold “*kingdom of power, grace and glory*” – recognizing and confessing faith in a God who is

awesome, great and good, His power and presence evident in this world for all to see and His mercy everlasting! Thus, in this prayer we pray that God's kingdom would "*come to us also.*"

And, therein lays the rub, the friction, the tension with which I began this message, because if **God is King** [*and He is!*] then **I am not!** If we desire His "*kingdom to come*" then our desires are subject to His will and way in our lives. God is first and we are not! "*Thy kingdom come*" is a passionate prayer and plea on our part that "*when the heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, [as He did in Holy Baptism] that, we by His grace would believe His holy Word, and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.*"

If Lent does anything for me, it reminds me season after season how "*ungodly*" I can be, even though I "*believe His holy Word!*" Yes, take off this white robe Preston, how dare I wear the cross, pretending to instruct you in how to "*lead a godly life!*" Did not I, you, just confess that "*we have turned from God and given ourselves over to the power of sin – busted for things we have done and failed to do, known and unknown?*" No wonder we need to keep on praying, as Jesus taught us, "*Our Father who art in heaven, holy be your name, your kingdom come!*"

And Lent reminds us, thankfully, season after season, that God did come, in the Person of One most unlikely to be a King. It has been written about Jesus that...

*“He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in still another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was 30. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book or held an office. He never owned a house. He didn't go to college. He never traveled more than 200 miles from the place He was born. He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He was only 33 when public opinion turned against Him. His friends deserted Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. When He was dying, His executioners gambled for His clothing, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Centuries have come and gone, yet today...all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of people on earth as much as that **One Solitary Life**.¹*

“Thy kingdom come” is a prayer that Jesus, the Son of God and King of Kings, the Savior who gave His life for our sins on Calvary’s cross, would affect our lives today; infecting us with the Holy Spirit; sparking our hearts to be more loving; influencing our words to be more thoughtful, gentle and kind; honoring God first and foremost in all that we say and do! The outcome of praying the second petition of The Lord’s Prayer, as Dr.

Luther so powerfully challenges, is that we would “*lead more godly lives here in time and there in eternity!*”

Astronaut James Erwin is one of but a few men to walk on the moon. As he stood upon the lunar landscape and looked up at the earth, [*now that’s a God thing isn’t it!*] it is reported that he prayed for one of the first times in his life. He thought about the strife among nations, poverty, hunger, and rampant evil; and he thought to himself: “*What is more important than man walking on the moon is that God should walk on earth.*”² And He did, in the person of Jesus Christ, the crucified Savior and risen Lord, so that we, by His grace, through faith, might “*lead more godly lives.*”

My friends, this is no rote, pious, child-like sentence, when we pray, “*Thy kingdom come!*” We dare not skip over the words, nor ignore the challenge, because in this prayer God is calling us to be more like him, day and day, until that day when He comes again. It’s the essence of a prayer sung so beautifully in the musical Godspell:

*Day by day, day by day,
O dear Lord three things I pray
To see thee more clearly,
To love thee more dearly,
To follow thee more nearly,
Day by day.*³

Sounds a lot like the petition: “*Thy kingdom come!*”
May it be so in Jesus’ name! AMEN.

¹ Francis, James Allan. *The Real Jesus and Other Sermons*. The Judson Press, 1926, p.121.
² "Thy Kingdom Come," Sermon shared by Robert Leroe, www.sermoncentral.com, Used by permission
³ © Range Road Music Inc., Sony/ATV Harmony, New Cadenza Music Corp.