

Give Us This Day: 2. What is to Come
Matthew 6:9-10; Luke 22:41-42
September 20, 2020
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We are in the home stretch of an election season. And on Friday, Minnesota was at the center of it all with two candidates trying to rally support. I was reminded of a story of two candidates who were in a heated contest, and in the midst of a debate, one said to the other, "The difference between me and you is values, and my values are based on my faith, and it's clear you don't have faith." And the other candidate said, "What do you mean I don't have faith. I'm deeply committed to my faith." And the other said, "You may say that but I know you don't go to church. I'll bet you don't even know the Lord's Prayer." "That's not true. I learned the Lord's Prayer as a child, and I say it all the time." "Then prove it. I'll bet you \$20 you can't say it right now." "I accept your bet," he said as he began reciting the prayer. "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray my soul the Lord to keep." And the other candidate shook his head while reaching for his wallet: "Here's the \$20. I never would have guessed you could recite the Lord's Prayer."

Most of us have memorized the true Lord's Prayer, but do we really know it? What are we praying and why did Jesus teach this particular prayer? Last week, we learned from the opening phrase: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. What we learned is that God loves you and wants you to have a personal relationship with you. God loves even those people you find it hard to love. The God who spans the universe is as close to you as the air you breathe. So we pray, not my name but God's name be hallowed in all I say and do. And this week, we look at the next phrase: **Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.** This one phrase is not only central to this prayer but it is central to what Jesus was doing. And if we understand this phrase, we will understand what his life, death, and resurrection were all about.

Thy kingdom come. Whenever I say the prayer, I try to emphasize the word "thy." Because it helps me move away from this tendency to focus on myself and what I want. I haven't shown a picture of my grandson recently. He was at our house on Friday as I was writing this message. He's 14 months old and already he knows what he wants. And he wants his grandparent's undivided attention. Life is all about him. And we carry that tendency with us the rest of our lives. Prayer is not about telling God anything God doesn't already know. God knows what I want. Prayer is not convincing God but connecting with God. Mother Teresa said, **"Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gift of God himself."** Prayer is about letting go of "my" and opening my heart to "thy."

Thy kingdom come. And what is this kingdom? Scripture tells us there will come a day at the end of history when God will say, "enough!" Sensing that moment was near, the apostle John describes that moment: **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."** Then the one seated on the throne said, **"Look! I'm making all things new."** (Revelation 21:1-5) And when that happens, the world will be as it is in heaven. We also know that when we die, we enter that heavenly realm where there's no more pain, no

more hardship, no more brokenness, but grace, mercy, kindness, justice, and love all of the time. That's heavenly.

But in his first sermon, Jesus announced that God's kingdom was already breaking into this world. And that happens whenever we do what God calls us to do. When we show kindness to someone, it is a glimpse of heaven. When we sacrifice for others, it is a glimpse of heaven. In May, we became aware of a family associated with Iglesia Piedra Viva and all four members of the family had covid. The father was hospitalized, and they did not qualify for unemployment assistance but persons in this church stepped forward to pay their rent. They caught a glimpse of heaven. Two weeks ago, we added an additional room to Bloom Early Learning. Some parents cannot work from home and keep their employment, but children are learning from home. Who will care for the children? One family came here, hoping and praying we might have an answer. If the parents reduced their employment to be at home with their children, their home and their efforts to live assistance free were at risk. But when the mom was told you had a place for their children, she broke down with tears of joy. A glimpse of heaven. To be part of a community that does not give up on people but offers love and grace and mercy without judgment – that's us. Whenever you give yourself to God's purposes, thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done. And that's our struggle. The creation story from the book of Genesis is meant to help us see this struggle. Adam and Eve were placed in a garden paradise. God says, you can have everything, except for the fruit from one particular tree. If you eat it, it will hurt you, and you can't handle it. But what happens? That's the one thing they want. That's our story. The speed limit is 55 but we want to drive a little faster than that. Always pushing the boundaries. Adam and Eve hear the serpent's whisper – and haven't we all? "Don't believe God. Live a little. Take the risk. God won't let you get hurt." So they eat the fruit and paradise is lost. Adam and Eve were saying: not thy will but my will be done. But Jesus teaches the opposite: not my will but thy will be done.

On his final night, Jesus eats a meal with his disciples and then goes to the garden to pray. He knows the end is near. He knows he will be arrested, tortured, and killed. And in the garden, he falls to the ground in anguish, pleading with God – "please take this away from me. I don't want to endure this." In his head, he knew God had a plan to use his death and resurrection for the redemption of the world, but in his heart at that moment, he didn't want to do it. And yet, finally he prays "**Father, if it's your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but your will must be done.**" The first Adam: my will. The second Adam: thy will. Let that be our prayer. Every morning, I wake up grateful for another day – and after giving thanks, I pray: Use me, Lord. Not my will but thy will be done in and through me this day.

On earth as it is in heaven. Not just in my heart or my family or my community, but the whole earth. Let the whole world look like the kingdom of heaven. Not the way we want it but the way God wants – the way it is supposed to look. It's like this diagram: There is the world as it is (it's what we see in the news) and then there's the world as it is supposed to be. And our goal is to close the gap. What's the world as it is supposed to be? Jesus tells us it's the kingdom of heaven.

If you've ever been to London and ridden on the Tube, you've seen this: Mind the Gap. It is the gap between the platform and the train and if you are not careful, your foot could get stuck in the gap and die. So there are signs [slide] and before the train doors open, a voice says "Mind the Gap." How are you minding the gap? What's your picture of the world as it is supposed to be, and what are you doing to mind the gap?

For the past few years, we've been in partnership with Oakwood School. We have come alongside the principal, Sarabeth duNei, and said, wherever there is a gap, Messiah Church wants to fill it. So when there was a need for Reading volunteers, you stepped forward. We learned that teachers had been purchasing snacks for children who did not bring a snack or could not afford one, so we filled that gap. Already you have provided 5,000 snacks for this school year. Teachers are facing huge challenges in this school year. Who will encourage them and let them know there are people praying for them. You filled that gap. Then last week, you provided a gift card for every teacher, staff, para, and custodian. And I received this note (read it).

Here's the world as it is and here's the world as it should be and you are stepping up to mind the gap in so many ways in this community and around the world. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is our mission every day so that people in the future will know that we were here.

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of September 20, 2020

Weekly Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Thank you for the example of Jesus who made prayer the bedrock of his life and taught us to do the same. Grant us a deeper desire for prayer as we seek to follow Christ's example. Amen.

Monday, September 21

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-2, 4:17-23

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the desert of Judea announcing, "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!"

From that time Jesus began to announce, "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!"

As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," he said, "and I'll show you how to fish for people." Right away, they left their nets and followed him. Continuing on, he saw another set of brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father repairing their nets. Jesus called them and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people.

Observation: Matthew recapped both John the Baptizer's and Jesus' preaching with the words, "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!" Translators often render the Greek behind "Change your hearts and lives" as "repent," but we sometimes miss the point of that word. This is a call not merely for us to feel sorry for our sins or even just to accept forgiveness for them, but to choose a different and wiser course of living.

Application: Jesus began his public preaching ministry talking about the Kingdom of God. How was it different to proclaim, "Here comes the kingdom of heaven!" (Literally, "the Kingdom of heaven has come near") than to say, "God's kingdom will come someday"? In what ways is God's kingdom a current reality in your life, not just a distant future hope?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, “bring in your kingdom, so that your will is done on earth as it’s done in heaven.” Please do that in my everyday life, Lord. Amen.

Tuesday, September 22

Scripture: Psalm 145:11-13; Isaiah 9:2-7

They speak of the glory of your kingdom; they talk all about your power, to inform all human beings about God’s power and the majestic glory of God’s kingdom. Your kingdom is a kingship that lasts forever; your rule endures for all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all that he says, faithful in all that he does.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. As on the day of Midian, you’ve shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor. Because every boot of the thundering warriors, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned, fuel for the fire. A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be vast authority and endless peace for David’s throne and for his kingdom, establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness now and forever. The zeal of the LORD of heavenly forces will do this.

Observation: God’s kingdom was not a new idea when Jesus preached it. Psalm 145 described the hope and power of God’s kingdom. Israelites first believed God’s promise was about human kings descended from David (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Isaiah’s vision ran deeper. He said light would pierce the world’s darkness, peace be so universal that people would burn all blood-soaked garments, and hope, justice, and righteousness would reign. Exile and foreign rule harshly cut short David’s line. But Christians saw Jesus as the ultimate, eternal Son of David (Matthew 1:1, 21:9) who could uniquely fulfill all God had promised.

Application: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned,” Isaiah wrote. Yet even after he met Jesus, Paul could say, “Now we see a reflection in a mirror...now I see partially” (1 Corinthians 13:12). In what ways has Jesus already brought light into your dark world? In what ways are you waiting in hope for the full brilliance of God’s light?

Prayer: Lord, so much in our world, globally and locally, tugs me toward hopelessness. Renew and reinforce my ability to live in the light and the hope of your glorious kingdom. Amen.

Wednesday, September 23

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:5-7; Colossians 2:6-7

We don’t preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn’t come from us.

So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught.

Observation: In the Roman Empire, “Lord” was in no way a harmless or casual word. To preach Jesus Christ “as Lord” meant denying the Empire’s religious as well as political claim that Caesar was “Lord.” To invite people to “live in Christ Jesus the Lord” was to invite them to risk their social standing, and sometimes their very life, by committing to Jesus as the supreme ruler in their heart. Both Rome and Christians knew that in any kingdom, there can only be one Lord.

Application: Paul said, “We don’t preach about ourselves.” As N. T. Wright puts it in his commentary on this scripture: “Paul is very concerned that the Corinthians might have supposed he regarded himself as the head of the organization. He is simply a servant, a porter, a secretary, an assistant: he is merely someone who introduces people to the top man. He is one of the Messiah’s office staff.” What helps you resist the urge to try to impress people with your own good reputation or deeds, rather than introducing them to your Lord?

Prayer: King Jesus, come and rule over every part of my mind, my heart, my life. Keep showing me the corners where I’m holding back, wanting to choose my will over yours. Amen.

Thursday, September 24

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 14:4-18

The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. It won’t be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant with me even though I was their husband, declares the LORD. No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my Instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. They will no longer need to teach each other to say, “Know the LORD!” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins.

Who are you to judge someone else’s servants? They stand or fall before their own Lord (and they will stand, because the Lord has the power to make them stand). One person considers some days to be more sacred than others, while another person considers all days to be the same. Each person must have their own convictions. Someone who thinks that a day is sacred, thinks that way for the Lord. Those who eat, eat for the Lord, because they thank God. And those who don’t eat, don’t eat for the Lord, and they thank the Lord too. We don’t live for ourselves and we don’t die for ourselves. If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to God. This is why Christ died and lived: so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on your brother or sister? We all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God. Because it is written, *As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God.* So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. So stop judging each other. Instead, this is what you should decide: never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of your brother or sister. I know and I’m convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is wrong to eat in itself. But if someone thinks something is wrong to eat, it becomes wrong for that person. If your brother or sister is upset by your food, you are no longer walking in love. Don’t let your food destroy someone for whom Christ died. And don’t let something you consider to be good be criticized as wrong. God’s kingdom isn’t about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever serves Christ this way pleases God and gets human approval.

Observation: How, in a broken world like ours, could even Jesus pray with a straight face for God's will to be "done on earth as it's done in heaven"? (He modeled that prayer for us, of course, as he faced the agony of crucifixion: "not my will but your will must be done"—Luke 22:41-42.) The prophet Jeremiah and the apostle Paul both saw that the ultimate hope of that, for individuals and communities, lay in people who chose to serve that Jesus as Lord, as King. They trusted that only Jesus' forgiving, loving presence could transform people from the inside out.

Application: In Romans 14, Paul addressed Christian house churches who were highly critical of each other's different opinions about non-essential faith practices. He asked pointedly, "Who are you to judge someone else's servants?" A shared commitment to Jesus as Lord means we are not "Lord" over one another's lives. When do you believe Paul's counsel to "stop judging each other" was more vital to people on both sides of an issue than proving they were right about that issue?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, engrave your instructions on my heart. Remind me that those instructions include not passing judgments on servants who answer to you, not me. Amen.

Friday, September 25

Scripture: Ephesians 5:8-13

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, so live your life as children of light. Light produces fruit that consists of every sort of goodness, justice, and truth. Therefore, test everything to see what's pleasing to the Lord, and don't participate in the unfruitful actions of darkness. Instead, you should reveal the truth about them. It's embarrassing to even talk about what certain persons do in secret. But everything exposed to the light is revealed by the light.

Observation: The apostles John and Paul both used the spiritual contrast of "darkness" with "light." The contrast grew from the typical human reaction to physical light. People who want to do wrong, or something they are ashamed for others to know about, usually choose to do those things in darkness if they can. Ephesians was sure that, living in both God's grace and God's power, Christ-followers can be at peace with the prospect of God's light exposing "everything."

Application: What are some thoughts or acts in which God has moved you from darkness to light? (The question applies even if you've always been a Christian.) How can recalling those past advances give you hope and trust for God's leading in the future? Doing God's will on earth as it is in heaven starts with our individual lives. Have you ever intentionally "tested" parts of your life, as verse 10 suggested, to discern light from darkness? What is one change you will make in your life to live more fully as a "child of the light"?

Prayer: God, creator of light, keep illuminating the darkest corners of my life. Keep guiding me as I test habits and practices, seeking to live every day as a child of your light. Amen.

Saturday, September 26

Scripture: Revelation 1:4-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10

John, to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace and peace to you from the one who is and was and is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before God's throne, and from Jesus Christ—the faithful witness, the firstborn from among the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the

earth. To the one who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, who made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and always. Amen.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Observation: In Exodus 19:6, Moses received this message for Israel: "You will be a kingdom of priests for me and a holy nation." 1 Peter 2 and Revelation 1 applied very similar language to all of Christ's followers. Unlike most human kingdoms, a set of lines on a map do not define God's Kingdom. It consists of all people who love and serve God, including you. Praying for the coming of the Kingdom is not a wishful dream of an idealized future. It is a claim of our true citizenship here and now, a way of bowing to God as our true king, and an expression of our confidence that the day will come when God's reign reaches every corner of our world.

Application: As children of God, we are not just isolated individuals—we are a kingdom, a community where God reigns. How are you growing with other Christians in your active service to God's Kingdom and will, as well as in knowledge? Are you up for the privilege and challenge of being a citizen, a representative, of God's Kingdom each day?

Prayer: Lord, let your Kingdom come within me, and then through me as I interact with the people around me. Let me live in ways that truly make the coming of your Kingdom good news. Amen.