

"THY KINGDOM COME"

Matthew 6:10

It is impossible to study the New Testament without realizing that the outstanding passion of Christ's heart was the Kingdom of God. This expression, recorded in the Old Testament, set the fires of high and holy expectation to burning in His soul. As He performed His daily tasks and strolled among the solitude of His native hills, the thought that would not let Him go was that of the Kingdom of God. He meditated upon this Kingdom when He went to worship in the synagogue. It was about the Kingdom that He spoke to His Father in the sacred place of prayer. Doubtless it was the theme of His conversation with His friends, or with His mother and brothers and sisters in the intimacy of their family circle.

After He had locked the door of the carpenter shop and left it never to return, He went forth to share His enthusiasm with others. In His first sermon He said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." What He said then, He frequently repeated throughout His ministry. With a genius at which all of the centuries have marvelled, He told story after story to illustrate the meaning and the supreme worth of the Kingdom. By and by the fires that burned upon the altar of His own heart were kindled within the hearts of a few others. These He sent out to preach. However, He did not trust them to select their own theme. He told them that the Kingdom of God was to be the theme of their preaching.

Continuing our study of the Lord's Prayer, we note that having instructed His disciples to pray for the hallowing of God's name, Christ told them to give expression in another brief petition to the deepest desire of their hearts in the words, "Thy kingdom come." The disciples were "looking for the Kingdom," and they followed One Who would, as they hoped, in due time assume the Messianic prerogatives foreshadowed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

A soul truly devoted to God joins heartily in this petition, "Thy kingdom come," which implies the great truth that God is a king. He who hath a kingdom can be no less than a king. "For God is the King of all the earth" (Psalm 47:7). As King "God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness" (Psalm 47:8). He hath a regal title and is high and mighty. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isaiah 57:15). He hath His kingly prerogatives. He is a great King, great in and of Himself. "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods" (Psalm 95:3). His greatness appears in the effects of His power. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:8). God is a glorious King. "Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory" (Psalm 24:10). He hath the highest throne, the richest crown, the largest dominion and the longest possession. "The Lord sitteth King for ever" (Psalm 29:10). He sits upon His throne where no other king does; He rules the will and the affections.

Since He is such a glorious King, crowned with wisdom, armed with power and bespangled with riches, all should certainly trust in Him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee" (Psalm 9:10). Trust Him with your soul; you cannot put this jewel in safer hands. Also, let us trust all our affairs with this great King Who has the power of life and death in His hand.

There is no more comprehensive petition in the Lord's Prayer than this, "Thy kingdom come." It is also practical because it links man in his

prayer and in his service with the ideal purpose and redeeming grace of God. It summarizes all that God can will for us as well as all that we can pray for ourselves. The word "kingdom" suggests the analogy of earthly rulers and monarchies. As to the Ruler of this Kingdom, we must recognize that His authority is not based on His power, which is the ultimate basis of earthly rule, but on His character. God is our rightful King, not because He can do with us what He wills, but because He is infinitely wise and good; because He is revealed to us as our Father and deserves our full homage and our absolute service.

It is not surprising that this prayer which begins in the shrine of the worship of God should move out in the missionary zeal and concern for the glory of God. The moment that we really pray, "Our Father which art in heaven," and realize something of the blessedness and joy of that relationship, our first concern is that others might share that relationship and enter with us into the Kingdom of God. "Thy kingdom come" is always the desire of the heart which is entered into right relationship with God and is eager that others should come into that joy also.

"Hallowed be thy name" is a cry of adoration. The moment we express concern for the glory of God and have a real desire that in every detail of our lives He should be glorified, we become convinced of our inability to glorify Him unless His Kingdom be established in our hearts.

In "Thy kingdom come" we find a two-fold meaning--it prays for a Kingdom of grace and anticipates a Kingdom of glory. The first is personal and claims a present experience; the second is prophetic and anticipates the future. None can truly pray, "Thy kingdom come in the world" until first he has prayed, "Thy kingdom come in my heart."

For what are we asking when we pray for the coming of the Kingdom? We are asking that God take the throne of our individual hearts, but we are requesting far more. A kingdom implies subjects. This is a prayer for others, for a society where the will of God is recognized as supreme. Or, to express it another way, it is a prayer for a social order in which Christ would feel at home. In praying this prayer, we are asking for a community into which Christ would fit, for homes in which He could be entertained without embarrassment, for churches upon all the ministries of which He could look with approval, for a city whose streets He could walk without having His heart broken.

We pray for the triumph of the moral government of God; His rule in the region of mind, heart and will; the establishment of His authority where it has been ignored and resisted; the final victory of God's righteousness and love over every form of wrong and hate.

There are essential differences between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. In an earthly kingdom the ruler, though receiving homage on account of his office, may be selfish, proud, tyrannical, odious and contemptible. But the Head of this Kingdom is infinitely holy. Earthly rulers can control the conduct of their subjects, but this King reigns over the thoughts, affections and wills. Earthly kingdoms are established for the promotion of their own safety, wealth and glory. Their object is the increase of earthly territory, the amassing of treasures or the extension of the means of pleasure. But, the Kingdom of God is intended to promote the happiness of all mankind, irrespective of territory or race, by reconciling all to God and so to each other. Earthly kingdoms are based on force, but the diffusion of God's Kingdom is not by force. It is upheld and diffused by spiritual agents alone; truth enlightening the conscience and love constraining the heart.

When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we express our conviction that we live in a world that is at least partially in rebellion against God. All around the world there are citizens of the Kingdom, but the Kingship for which God is seeking is not complete. Vast multitudes have never acknowledged God's Kingship. When we pray this prayer, we acknowledge our utter dependence upon God. If the Kingdom is ever to come, it will do so through God's power. All purely human schemes are doomed to failure.

Here then is a petition that is at once a prayer and a program. We are to pray "Thy kingdom come" with a sense of the priceless worth of that for which we ask. We must individually surrender to the claims of our God. We must acknowledge the great spiritual principles upon which His Kingdom is founded--love for God and love for man, obedience to God and service for man. We can help to bring in the Kingdom through the faithful preaching of the gospel. This was the appointed method of the Master, as certainly as the church was His appointed means through which it was to be done. The Great Commission constitutes Christ's marching orders to His churches.

When Christ teaches us to pray that God's Kingdom may come, He means that we are to pray that God may reign here upon the earth, that men here may acknowledge Him as King and that life here may be regulated by His commands. It is our joy and strength to remember that in spite of all the lustre and show made by the forces of evil the Lord God reigneth.

When you pray "Thy kingdom come," you request the fulfilment of all of God's purposes on earth. "Thy kingdom come" means "Lord, come into our hearts; take the throne there; rule there; make us completely Thine." Do we really want that? It means that we are asking for every cherished sin to be cast out of our hearts. It means that God's will and not our own may rule. That is a great prayer. Many love their sins, their pleasures, their money and themselves too much to pray sincerely, "Thy kingdom come." May God give us the grace to pray honestly and earnestly that His Kingdom may come! May He make us willing and able to give to His commands a great and complete obedience! It is only true and loyal subjects of the Kingdom who can extend its boundaries and further its interest. God truly reigns in our hearts, and His Kingdom begets in us righteousness, peace and joy. We shall then be able to go forth and win others as loyal subjects to our King. When we pray this prayer, we are praying that God may rule in every department of our lives--professional, business, political, social and spiritual. No one truly prays this prayer, "Thy kingdom come," who does not bend his energies to the task of seeking to establish God's Kingdom on earth.

How is this Kingdom to be established? If this Kingdom of grace and love is to be established on this earth, it can never be done by force. Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon built their empires with the sword and cemented them with blood, but the Kingdom of God cannot be established in this manner. From time to time attempts have been made to hasten the coming of the Kingdom by force, but the method of compulsion has never succeeded.

Simon Peter had that spirit when he pointed to the two swords the disciples possessed. The Crusaders, spurred on by the burning eloquence of Peter the Hermit, committed the same blunder. The old Saxon and Gothic kings, who when they accepted Christianity themselves compelled their people to be baptized as well, followed the same mistaken method. But these people did not advance the Kingdom of God one whit. You do not make a man a member of God's Kingdom by baptizing him, or by enrolling him among the members of a church, or by calling him a Christian. Men must have their hearts changed. If they are to enter the Kingdom of God, they must be born again. Coercion may increase the membership of a sect or organization, but it

cannot add anybody to the Kingdom of God. It is not by the sword that the Kingdom is to come, but it is by the cross. That is the weapon whereby God's Kingdom is to be established. We are to conquer through the power of love. Of course, the cross means love at its best. It is by the story of the cross that men's hearts are to be broken, and their affection and allegiance won. Preach the cross! Exalt the dying Redeemer of men! When we lift Him up, He will draw people to Him. He is pledged to do so, and He will not fail.

When we know God as our Father, it is to be expected that we should want His Kingdom to come. If only God would rule! That is what it means for His Kingdom to come. The only way in which things can be made right is by God's rule of love becoming effective. To pray for the coming of the Kingdom is to ask for the coming of a reign of righteousness, justice and fair play. It is to pray for rightness of the individual heart with God and rightness between man and man. It means to ask that all sin be dethroned and that righteousness and justice be enthroned.

Those of us who are in the kingdom of grace should seek to make Christ the sovereign Lord of our lives. It should be our desire that this kingdom should be extended in our own hearts. It is to the extent that we surrender to God and see to it that our lives conform to His wishes that God's Kingdom comes in our hearts. Moreover, we should have a great longing for His Kingdom to come in the hearts and lives of others. So, when we truly pray, "Thy Kingdom come," we are praying for the proclamation of the gospel of Christ and the extension of its sway and power. While preaching, teaching, serving and conducting our daily tasks with the building of the Kingdom of God as our constant goal, we should be longing for the time when Christ will return, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ.