

LD 48; Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 6:33 The Kingdom of God I. Identifying the Kingdom II. How this Kingdom Comes III. Responding to His Kingdom

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we all have our various allegiances. Who you align with when it comes to our support. We have our favorite rulers and politicians that we support- people we are hoping make it to the general election. We also have our favorite sports teams and players- people we root for as we wear our team colors proudly on our shirts. But we also have a deeper and more significant allegiance that we must give. When it comes to kings and kingdoms we tend to think that this way of life ended back in the Middle Ages. We don't have kings anymore- right? And even if we have a king, they are nothing more than a puppet and figurehead as evident in England. Who needs a king- right? Well, as we are going to see today, we are all part of a kingdom- whether we know it or not! As we come to the 2nd petition in the Lord's Prayer, we see that Jesus is referencing the kingdom of God. After God's glory and the honoring of His name comes the establishment of His kingdom. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us to pray for the establishment of God's kingdom.

I. Identifying the Kingdom

In our first point we start by identifying the kingdom. What is this kingdom of God of which we pray? The Kingdom of God is a way to refer to the reign of God over all. Although it is true that God is king over all as the creator of this world, there is a specific focus on the redeeming work that takes place within the broader context of this world. Specifically, this Kingdom is connected to the person and work of Jesus as the appointed King and regent from the Father. In Psalm 2 we find that the Son of God is appointed to be king who rules from the right hand of God. A kingdom is a form of government in which one person has chief power and authority. So we could say that the kingdom of God describes the reign and rule of Christ as it is made known. Wherever Jesus and His work is seen, that is where you find the kingdom of God. In its clearest form, the kingdom of God is manifested in the sending of Jesus the king into the world. When the gospel of Mark opens in mark 1:15 we find that the kingdom of God is at hand. It is the

presence of Jesus that brings God's kingdom into their very presence of man. So Jesus is the king of God's kingdom and his reign describes the extent of His rule. Throughout the gospel, Jesus reveals the kingdom and describes the kingdom in various ways. The kingdom is near as we read in Mark 1- but it is also not yet present as Jesus teaches in Acts 1:7. There is an already present aspect and a not yet fully seen aspect to this kingdom. It is here and it is still coming. There is also a visible and invisible aspect. As Jesus says in Luke 17- the kingdom is within you. And again in John 18 speaking to Pilate, my kingdom is not of this world. Perhaps the clearest way in which we can see the kingdom of God is in the subjects of this kingdom. As BC art. 29 puts it, since Jesus is king He must have his subjects. So how does Jesus make subjects- and how does He rule over these subjects?

II. How this Kingdom Comes

So how does this kingdom of God come? Well, if the kingdom of God describes the sphere and realm of His rule, how does Jesus display His rule on this earth? How do people become citizens of this kingdom? In the negative; we note that Jesus does not extend His kingdom as other kings have. In the past with humanity, if a king wanted to expand his rule he would have to do it by force or manipulation. In other words, kingdoms were established with the use of the sword and spear. Submit or perish was the refrain. But Jesus does not use guns and tanks to establish His kingdom! Jesus does not use force or manipulation to make subjects! No treaty or pact with other nations can secure the establishment of this kingdom! No lines on a map determine the realm of his influence. No, the kingdom of God comes as the rule of Jesus is made evident. The weapons for the establishment of this kingdom is that of the sword of the Spirit and the Word. How does Jesus expand His rule, by changing hearts and lives! The expansion of the kingdom accompanies the preaching of the word. As QA 123 says, rule us by your Spirit and word. What we are doing in this petition is this- we are asking Jesus to bring His Kingdom to this earth by way of the Means of Grace! We are praying that Jesus would rule over His people so that they come to know, love and submit to Him better. And as we submit and

obey, the presence of His kingdom is made known. We are really praying for the church to be built- for God's people to be gathered and sanctified. This is the principle way in which His kingdom comes! Commitment to the kingdom implies not only a commitment to the king, but also a commitment to His people. So the church and her welfare are very much in view when we pray- your kingdom come. But the establishment and maturity of the church is not the only way in which we see Christ's kingdom. No, we also see His kingdom come as the kingdom of opposition is pushed back. Not everyone is happy to see Christ's kingdom established on this earth. No, Jesus the king does have enemies. These enemies are principally the devil, evil men, fallen angels and false teaching. Like every king, King Jesus has an enemy that seeks to undermine and resist His rule. The kingdom of darkness opposes the kingdom of light- the devil makes warfare against Christ and His people. This conflict is also recognized in this petition. Not only establish your church, but protect her as you put down those who revolt against you. Being the king of kings and lord of lords means that Jesus has the right to be worshiped as lordy all. Even though many rebel, this deserved right of worship remains. As Psalm 2 put it, if you will not kiss the Son you will be terrified by His wrath. So when we pray, "your kingdom come", we are also asking Jesus to remove all those who stand in His way! Cast down those who refuse to acknowledge you as their king! Frustrate the devil's schemes, expose every lie. Trample the snake under your feet and cast every devil into the lake of fire. This is not only a just punishment of the wicked, it is also a part of His work of protecting His people. As Rom. 16 puts it, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Or as Jesus said in Mt. 16, the gates of hell will not prevail against Jesus and His kingdom.

Matthew 13 includes a group of parables called the "Kingdom Parables." In these parables we learn that the kingdom of God starts small but it will grow to a great height. In the parable of the mustard seed we see that the church began very small but continues to grow even to this day. We can pray this prayer with faith and confidence- the kingdom is and will come! The second lesson we learn from these kingdom parables is that the kingdom dwells in mixed company

today. In the parable of the wheat and weeds, we find that the kingdom is growing in a world where the wicked and the righteous live side by side. We can expect conflict as we pray this prayer! And the third lesson we learn from these parables is that the kingdom is precious. In the parable of the pearl of great price, we learn that the kingdom and our reception of it is worthy more than all the gold and silver in this world. So to summarize this point, the kingdom comes as Jesus gathers, matures and protects His church. So this petition is really a prayer for Jesus to build his church and expand His influence on earth. As Calvin put it, the task of the church is to make the invisible kingdom visible.

III. Responding to His Kingdom

Now that we understand what the kingdom is and how it is coming, in our last point we consider how we are to respond to the Kingdom as it comes. Earlier we read from Mt. 6 which said- seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. So our first response to the coming kingdom is to keep the kingdom first! Seeing the rule of Jesus made evident in this world and in our own lives is to be our primary pursuit! Our greatest desire and joy is to be in seeing others brought into the fold and in the kingdom. So there is a definite pursuit of obedience and a focus on missions that is a part of this “seeking first” in the kingdom. But if you look at Mt. 6, the command to seek first comes in the context of sinful worrying that we are all prone too. So seeking first the kingdom is in contrast to worrying about food and clothes as well. Being kingdom focussed is the cure to the worry that we all struggle with! So the way in which we respond to the coming of the kingdom is by being committed to its establishment at the expense of worrying about the nuts and bolts of daily life. Next, in Mark 1:15 which we also read, we find that since the kingdom of God is at hand, we must repent and believe in the gospel. The arrival of Jesus as king on the world stage ushered in the final chapters of history. Up to this point, the kingdom of God was directly linked to the nation of Israel. After Jesus arrived and after he poured out the Spirit on pentecost, the kingdom expanded dramatically. Citizens of the kingdom were made in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and beyond to the ends of the world. Jesus is

gathering His church from all nations- so the kingdom of God is breaking into every area of this world. In light of this fact, what must we do? Repent and believe the gospel as Mark 1 says. So how are you to get ready for the kingdom? Or how do you prepare for the return of the King? Well, repent from your sins and believe the good news of the gospel! Putting this in the context of prayer once again- when we pray- Your Kingdom come- we are asking Jesus to establish His kingdom. One of the chief ways this is done is by His word and Spirit. Basically we are asking Jesus to make us good citizens! Sanctify us- add to your church and make us good and obedient subjects! May we and all men recognize and submit to your rightful rule. Do this until all of your people are gathered and the earth is filled with the knowledge of your word. There is an end to this petition as well- do this until your kingdom fully comes as QA 123 concludes- until all your sheep are gathered and all your enemies are cast out. His kingdom will then be fully come- and God will be all in all.

To conclude, understanding where our allegiance lies is an important reminder. We all have our favorite teams and politicians. We think certain states or countries are better than others. But as Phil. 3 reminds us, our citizenship is in heaven. We are subjects of the heavenly king who rules and His kingdom is coming! Our allegiance is to Him first! Jesus Christ teaches us to pray for the establishment of God's kingdom. So seek first His kingdom- and pray for it to come as you submit to His rule!