

Part of the attraction of the Lord's Prayer is that it is God's creation. It's Jesus' answer to the request, "teach us to pray." It's his instruction manual for effective prayer. If you take it to heart, you can be sure that you're doing this spiritual exercise with proper form.

Today we are concentrating on the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, which is simply, "Thy Kingdom Come." This is truly a case of: do you know what you are asking for? I'm pretty sure a lot of Christians think that when they pray "Thy Kingdom Come" they are asking to go to heaven, or something like that. But the first thing I want you to understand is that Jesus is teaching us to pray for God's kingdom to come now; that His Father's kingdom would come and break into this world immediately. We are to pray for the rule and reign of God to be a living reality today. What does that mean? Let's think about it.

What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word "kingdom"? If you're me, it's Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom—just watched a show about it Sunday night. Star Wars land looks amazing. But I digress. You may think of the Magic Kingdom or the United Kingdom or various mobile games. Americans haven't spoken in terms of 'kingdom' for well over 200 years; nevertheless, what are some things we can say about kingdoms?

For one thing, a kingdom has a king, or at least someone who is in charge; someone with whom the buck stops. In the Magic Kingdom these days that would be Bob Iger, the CEO. In the United Kingdom, it is the Queen, though the Prime Minister does the busy work. In a kingdom, someone has the power and sets the rules.

Secondly, a kingdom has citizens. The Magic Kingdom has a continually rotating population of tourists. The UK has more permanent citizens. People enjoy the privileges of their kingdom by obeying the rules.

It almost goes without saying that a kingdom is a place. There are borders that clearly outline the location of the kingdom. If you step over the line, you're no longer in it anymore. You can point to a map and see where to find the United Kingdom and Walt Disney World.

So how does that compare to the kingdom of God? Well, His kingdom obviously has a ruler: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's kingdom is populated by those whom He has adopted in Holy Baptism; those who believe that Jesus is the 'exact representation' of God's nature and the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. So this kingdom has citizens too.

But where is it? That is the key question. You can't point to God's kingdom on a map, because it's not a political entity. God's kingdom is of the spirit. God's kingdom is not one place; it is every place that the story of Jesus is told. Wherever preachers plead with people to turn away from sin and to turn to Jesus for pardon and peace, there is the kingdom of God. Wherever children and adults are being baptized into relationship with God and given His triune name, there is the kingdom of God. Wherever Jesus presides at His table, serving His guests his

own body and blood for their forgiveness and life, there is the kingdom of God. Wherever teachers faithfully share the treasures of God's Word with fellow learners, there is the Kingdom of God. Wherever families share the love of Jesus and welcome Him into their homes, there is the kingdom of God. Wherever Christians openly speak about the difference Jesus has made in their lives—and wherever Christians serve as He served, here is the kingdom of God. Wherever the Holy Spirit enters a heart and ignites the flame of faith in Jesus, there is the kingdom of God.

Do you see? This is the 'kingdom' of "Thy Kingdom Come." We pray that the story of Jesus would continue to be told. We pray that the dynamic work of seeking the lost would continue to make citizens of this kingdom. We pray that the hurting would be comforted; and those in need would be served. So, how's that going to happen?

In the days of sailing ships, two pastors were aboard a vessel crossing the Atlantic Ocean. When a fire broke out in the hold of the ship, the one said, "Brother, let us go to the far end of the ship and pray."

"No, sir," came the reply. "We're going to stand right here and pass water buckets—and pray as we pass them!"

Prayer and action are a Christian's two willing hands. When you pray "Thy Kingdom Come," you're not just asking God to do His part. You're also asking how you can do yours. You're asking Him to make you into a kingdom-bringer. You're asking your holy Father to tell the story of Jesus through your life. Did you realize that? That's a big deal. And let me tell you, when you ask God to include you in kingdom building, He will honor your request. He might even lead people right to your door.

Take, for instance, a young man named Travis. He writes about himself, "Some years ago a teenage boy walked into a Lutheran church. To this day, he doesn't know exactly why he did...he was searching for something. He was the kind of boy you could easily overlook in a crowd. It would have been very easy for the members of that church to have said a nice hello and gone about their business, not giving him a second thought. But that's not what happened." Travis goes on to explain how some of the members of that church went out of their way to befriend him and showed him around and made him feel welcome. Today, Travis is director of outreach at a church in San Francisco.

That is just one example of being a kingdom bringer, and did you see how it works? You know you've brought the kingdom of Jesus to someone when they become a kingdom bringer themselves. From this point forward, when you pray "Thy kingdom come," I invite you to think about what you can do to bring the kingdom of God to someone else. What does God keep nudging you to do?

I'm going to let you think about that, and as you do, hear the words of Jesus: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all the things you need will be added to you."