

The Gospel reading I will be using is Matthew 6:5-14. In this chapter Matthew gives instructions or rather a collection of do's and don'ts regarding prayer and this particular section is one I'm sure is familiar to you all.

Matthew 6:5-14 New International Version (NIV)

Prayer

5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one. 14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Within these verses, verse 10 is the one I will be focusing on. This verse probably means slightly different things to different denominations and even between members of the same church. Some of the meanings I found are as follows:

1. As Christians we long for the Kingdom of God to come.

We yearn for that day when the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and ever over the whole earth.

- *Your kingdom come” means we are to pray that God will hasten Christ’s return to establish the literal Kingdom of God on this earth (Revelation 11:15; Matthew 6:33). We are to talk with Him about why we desperately need His Kingdom to come, mentioning specific troubling situations that we see going on in the world, in our own lives and in the lives of our friends and family (Ezekiel 9:4).*

2. The Kingdom of God is wherever God reigns.

- *If God reigns over your life, then the Kingdom of God is within you.*

3. And finally, Wesley's explanatory notes:

- ***Thy kingdom come*** — *May thy kingdom of grace come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth: may all mankind, receiving thee, O Christ, for their king, truly believing in thy name, be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy; with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into thy kingdom of glory, to reign with thee for ever and ever.*
- ***Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*** — *May all the inhabitants of the earth do thy will as willingly as the holy angels: may these do it continually even as they, without any interruption of their willing service; yea, and perfectly as they: mayest thou, O Spirit of grace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make them perfect in every good work to do thy will, and work in them all that is well pleasing in thy sight.*

(various sources)

Simply put, some believe Kingdom come means “when Christ returns and his Kingdom arrives and others believe we should follow His will on earth as it is in heaven and try to make heaven like earth. Wesley stresses following God’s will in this lifetime as a servant of God and acts of faith.

So I would like to ask you a question? If you were to imagine an ideal Christian community, what does that look like? Who would be there? What is everyone doing? It’s tough to try to imagine a scenario without it looking like some idealistic/ Stepford wife setting where everyone is happy. I myself envision all kinds of people, all ages, ethnicities and I can see people living in modest homes but the the part I have trouble visualizing is the economic aspect of it. I don’t believe we will all be equal financially. I see more equity and not such a large gap in income disparity but that is a tough issue to address so I am going to breathe a sigh of relief and not focus on that.

What about the rest of that vision in your head? How do people treat each other? How do they talk to one another?

If someone falls does someone help them get up. We all have different ideas in our head of what that should look like. Now take the image you have and ask yourself “ what kind of community would Jesus envision?” What is different or the same between the two? Would His world be more generous in all respects? How would that society function?

What does the Kingdom of God look like? The same questions there. What are people doing? How are they behaving? What is Jesus doing in the Kingdom of heaven? What might be different in your interpretation and Jesus's.

Many of us believe that faith produces acts of service and grace, so as a people of faith what can we do to make this earth more like kingdom come. Can we strive as a community to make our town and surrounding areas more like heaven on earth. Not totally of course, but could we embrace someone who is travelling or just stopping to fill up gas to have a short conversation with him, just be friendly. Maybe the traveller drives on a couple of blocks to a restaurant and he receives the same gracious treatment. Maybe that is the only time someone has asked about

his/her day or maybe it was the first friendly voice he had heard in a long time? We may never know how our interactions with others affect them directly or if they had any effect at all but we all feel better after performing a small act of kindness.

In this day and age sometimes being a Christian is not viewed positively, We are considered judgmental and intolerant but wouldn't it be nice to change that perception. I know a couple of people who have hearts of a servant but they aren't the norm. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Christians were identifiable first with love and graciousness. We are a small group here but if several small groups endeavored to pursue the same goal, imagine how brightly God's love would be reflected.

Every year at Thanksgiving we go to a family friend's home who is from Rwanda. At this gathering usually there are several others from Rwanda and other African countries such as Ghana, Algeria, Cameroon, all of whom have experienced political instability. In 1994 there was a civil war in Rwanda which resulted in the genocide of 800,000

individuals with nearly two million being displaced. This particular Thanksgiving people shared the struggles they went through during that time and the years afterward. Cleophas is the nephew of our Rwandan friend Pierre and Cleophas is married to Divine who is also from Rwanda. Cleophas had been in a refugee camp from the age of 8-11 and had shared that as soon as it was safe he and his family felt the camp in the Congo not knowing which country they would end up in. Cleophas explained that there was a very narrow path through the jungle and on either side of the path were dead bodies. It is so difficult to comprehend something like that. As the evening went on Divine shared some of her story. I knew Cleophas' story from long ago but I was hearing Divine's story for the first time. She related how from the age of 4 -14 she lived in Tanzania as a refugee. She explained how they were led to an area which they had to clear and start to rebuild their entire community from scratch. She said the one thing she still remembers is always being hungry and never having enough food. Sometimes the ration from the U.N. consisted only of a can of sardines for their family of 5 for the day. Others shared some of the struggles they had endured but

on that Thanksgiving day the remark that stuck in my head was Divine saying, "I saw many dead people but I'm so thankful I didn't have to see those who were killed with the machetes. Even the thought of it is traumatic, but if you met her you would never think she had those experiences.

She and Cleophas both are joyful and happy. When I think of Cleophas and Divine I wonder if they ever thought that their places of refuge were like a "kingdom come". Considering what they came through, that next place of safety but have meant the world to them. I am also sure that throughout their ordeals there were several people who did something small for Cleophas and Divine but in the mind and hearts of these two, the gesture or action was huge. The other thing that is apparent was the gratitude they expressed. Many of those at that Thanksgiving gathering are so full of gratitude. They live life joyously and the generosity they have received is reciprocated and paid forward to others.

So in this time we face perhaps we can move toward the goal of making this a place that expresses the love of Jesus. Perhaps we can be thankful for all that we have including our health and not take for granted how a small act of

kindness or a gentle, helpful word can make kingdom come
feel a little closer

Birthdays

Slater

Brian Nervig	April 26
Chelsea Snyder	April 27
Cassie Moore	April 28
Keegan Soder	April 28
Katelyn Ginger	May 1
Kris Halsne	May 2

Sheldahl

None