

How to Pray: Thy Kingdom, Thy Will

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

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Matthew 6:9-10 “This, then, is how you should pray:

‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN...”

Just as many Christians do not understand the Fatherhood of God, many Christians do not understand the Kingdom of God and what it means to surrender to God...Jesus teaches this next.

What is the Kingdom of God?

God’s kingdom is not a political entity. John 18:36 (Jesus) “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” God’s kingdom is not political, not national, not governmental. God’s kingdom IS eternal and it IS universal. We’re not trying to set up a theocracy. That is not what God wants. God’s plan is much bigger than the world we know. History is *HIS story*.

God’s kingdom is not just conceptual. 1 Corinthians 4:20 “*The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*” The kingdom of God is not just something you just talk about. It is not just conceptual or confessional or creedal. It is not something you sit around and debate, discuss, or dialogue. God’s kingdom is *doing*. God’s kingdom IS transformational and it IS experiential.

God’s kingdom God is not material. Romans 14:17 “*The kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink but it’s living right with God and a life of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*” The kingdom of God IS spiritual and it is relational. Connecting to God and connecting to each other.

Where is the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God is wherever Jesus is king. If Jesus is king in your heart then the kingdom of God is within you. If Jesus is king in heaven then the kingdom of God is in heaven. If Jesus is king here on the earth as one day when he comes back then the kingdom of God is on earth. In fact, the Bible says all three of those things. The Bible says the kingdom of God is in heaven. The Bible says the kingdom of God is within you. The Bible says the kingdom of God is on earth. It is wherever Jesus is king. It is wherever Jesus rules and Jesus reigns.

The kingdom of God is wherever God’s will is done. When we pray “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,*” the second phrase explains the first. Wherever God’s will is done, the kingdom is there. If God’s will is done in your family then God’s kingdom is in your family...done in your church then God’s kingdom is in your church..done in your decisions, then God’s kingdom is in your daily life.

Why pray “on earth as it is in heaven”?

In heaven, God’s will is perfectly done... and it’s heaven! God’s will is not done on earth much of the time. Insurance companies call earthquakes, an “act of God”. Cancer occurs and someone says “It must be God’s will.” No, it is not! God does not will bad to happen. We live in a fallen world where natural disasters occur... and where people choose their will be done...and then we can blame God for the consequences of human willfulness and natural disasters.

To pray “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,” is to say “God, YOU are in charge. I give YOU, all that is unchangeable in my life – those uncontrollable circumstances and uncooperative people and unexplained pain. You will never know God’s peace if you are fighting God.

What does that mean to surrender to God?

Surrendering to God means letting go of control. Psalms 46:10 (LB) “*Let go and know that I am God. I rule the nations. I rule the earth.*” When we face things beyond our control, we tend to go to extremes: becoming more controlling or just giving up. More controlling people are more insecure, more frightened, and more worried. Secure people don’t have to control situations. They relax. But when you feel stressed, pressured, or inadequate then you say, “I will make this thing happen.” And you become a tyrant. The other extreme is to give up and become a victim. You despair. You swallow all of your pain and then you wallow in it...and you are miserable. You surrender...but not to God. With one extreme you are playing god and with the other you are doing nothing. Surrendering to God is faith in action...acceptance, courage, and wisdom. Many people pray The Serenity Prayer which is based on The Lord’s Prayer (Reinhold Niebuhr, Germany, ~1934):

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as the pathway to peace; taking as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that You (God) will make all things right if I surrender to Your will so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.”

Surrendering to God means learning to be content. Philippians 4:11-13 “*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation...I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.*” Paul wrote this from prison. Worry, resentment, bitterness, guilt, shame, regret, self-pity, fear – none of these work...only learning to be content. Contentment is learned” (it is a mark of maturity). Contentment is a choice. Contentment is only possible through Christ’s strength. One of the

reasons we are not content is that God doesn't tell us why everything happens and that ticks us off. Why God? Listen: God is testing you to see if you will let go of control and will you learn to be content whether God explains it or not. Explanations don't change things anyway...but surrendering to God does bring change...just ask Paul.

Surrendering to God means laying down our plans. John 9:1-3 *"As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" "Neither, said Jesus, this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."* Friends, in the difficult times we are in, God wants to display His work in your life. We can blame Wall Street, we can blame Washington ...but assigning blame doesn't change things. Life is a test and with tests come problems. For this man it was blindness...regardless of what you face, God wants to display His work in your life. What is God's work in your life? Trust. Unselfishness. Giving. Stewardship. Helping others. Sacrificial love. I commend your giving money to our ministry and missions (like Heifer International). I commend your giving time in service here and in places like the homeless shelter (S.O.S.). As Christians, we share in bringing life to others by surrendering our life – time, talent, and treasure for God's purpose.

Surrendering to God means leaving the future to God. Proverbs 3:5-6 *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths."* God says if I choose to trust in the Lord Jesus and I don't listen to what I think is best but I listen to what God thinks is best, and I acknowledge God in every area of my life – my career, my family, my finances, every area of my life – God says, He will keep me in the right direction...keep me headed for heaven...keep me ushering in His kingdom daily as I do His will.