

# Sermon Text for August 2, 2020

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

I Chronicles 29:10-13, Matthew 6:9-13

*“Thy Kingdom Come”*

If there ever were a time that we needed to be taught how to pray, it would be for such a time as this. How are you doing First Presbyterian? Over the past month we have been looking at our Savior Jesus Christ who taught his disciples how to pray because they asked him, teach us how to pray like your cousin John the Baptist taught his disciples how to pray. Jesus responds and says, pray then in this way, Daddy, you are in heaven, help us make your name holy in how we live our lives. He doesn't stop there, and today we see a second petition, the first being make your name holy to the world in how we live our lives.

Liturgically the Sunday right before Advent we celebrate what is called Christ the King Sunday and it is on that Sunday that we emphasize the fact, not the opinion, but the fact that Jesus shall reign and does reign wherever the sun runs its course on this earth. We proclaim that Jesus is king and his kingdom is being lived out through us. So today we profess and pray together and are taught together by our Savior the simple phrase: Thy Kingdom Come. I warned you earlier that studying the Lord's prayer is going to put us in a position where we have to choose between what God wants us to do and what we want to do. It is a prayer that is transformative and can rock your world if you obey it. Today is one of those days.

## **READ SCRIPTURE**

We also take a glimpse at our Old Testament reading to see how it intersects with our New Testament reading and since we are going to have the same New Testament reading through the first week of October, it is important to see how this Scripture in I Chronicles intersects with what we read in Matthew. We find king David, you remember him, the one who was a shepherd boy who played the harp for Saul and killed Goliath and then became arguably the most powerful king in history even while committing adultery with Bathsheba which changed his legacy but still his son Solomon is able to build the temple. That's a lot, but that is the David that we find in this Scripture.

We find King David who is taking stock of his kingdom, of all that he has and truly how powerful he is and he calls together the entire assembly of the people, we see that in vs.10 and he could have gone one of two ways. In front of the whole nation he could have told the people how good he was, how he had never made a mistake, how what he had done had not only built up the

nation and the people, but that it was the most powerful nation on earth since history had begun to be written. He could have gone that way, he was, after all, king, and his kingdom was, after all, impressive. But he went a different way.

David here at the height of his power, at the height of the kingdom of Israel says the following in front of the entire nation: “Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, the majesty, all that is in the heavens and on earth is yours, yours is the kingdom.” Yes, even this great kingdom that I have built up and established because of my skill in battle and my diplomatic abilities, all of this kingdom, Lord, is yours. It almost seems as if Jesus takes David’s words here and inserts them into the Lord’s prayer, they should sound a bit familiar.

We must be able to learn from David here, David who was the most famous and powerful king in history who prays and gives thanks to God because all that he saw in front of him was actually a gift from God, was actually a result not of his ability, but God’s love for him and the nation of Israel. Don’t we often look at what we think we have, maybe we take inventory in what we have done and think we have created our own kingdom and instead of like David giving God the glory we look to consolidate and try to get even more because time is running out and our kingdom has to increase.

What kingdoms have we tried to create which we can control while David teaches us, and David would know, that only God’s kingdom will last. Our jobs and the value they give to us and our financial stability. We have seen how tenuous they are over this time period. Our families and the hard work that we have put into them to make sure they are stable. Our way of life here in the United States which is being questioned and put to the test because of systemic injustices that have historically been put in place to favor people like us. Each of these things are kingdoms that we have falsely built up thinking that we are in control of them when all along, like David, we ought to take the time to give praise to God for anything and everything that we have. Today we are looking at Thy kingdom come, not My kingdom come.

So that takes us back to Matthew. I hope you are enjoying reading that Scripture every Sunday and that every Sunday something different and new jumps out, if for no other reason than the fact that we are looking at a different phrase every Sunday from that prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Today we are going to have a traditional 3 point sermon which will look at every word in the phrase that we have for today. Thy – Kingdom – Come.

**Thy** kingdom come. Right away we see Jesus putting us in our place. We need to realize that we absolutely have no say, zero say, in what God’s kingdom is going to look like. Think

about that for a second. God's kingdom is going to look like what God wants it to look like. It is God's kingdom and we don't get a vote for how it should be. If it were up to us we would say My kingdom Come and My will be done. How much easier that would be and how much clearer, and what a disaster it would be. If that were the case then we would find ourselves caught up in one mess after another, kind of like what we find ourselves in right now.

The Christian life is a very long, sometimes painful, but ultimately joyful, process of being dethroned. We go through it all the time. As parents we are dethroned by our children, as workers we are dethroned by our bosses. Both as a pastor in Florida and here in Strasburg where we had large agricultural communities farmers understand better than anyone what it means to be dethroned by the weather. As soon as we think that we have things under control, under our control, something happens completely out of our control, a hail storm, early pests because we had a mild winter, whatever it may be, we are reminded that it is God's kingdom. For the rest of us, we pretend for a much longer period of time that we are in control until something really bad happens, then we are brought back to our senses.

This experience since March has been a painful process of dethroning us and reminding us that Thy kingdom come. The question we need to ask as we are reminded that we are not the ones in control is "In all I do and say, am I seeking first and foremost the kingdom of God or my own glory, my own desires, my own wishes. It is a great question for decision making, especially when we are making decisions that will affect a large group of people, or just my family. If we are seeking God's glory then it will strengthen our families and it will strengthen the church.

We are so tempted to sing at the top of our lungs, I did it my way and this prayer forces us to change the lyrics to I did it God's way. Jesus is knocking the selfishness right out of our prayers and our lies and filling our minds not with what we want but with what God wants for us and our world. God is reorienting our lives away from ourselves and toward God. **Thy** kingdom come.

Thy **kingdom** come. The term kingdom comes from the Greek basilea from which our term basilica comes. Interestingly a basilica is a church structure normally with a dome. It has nothing to do with our current understanding of what a kingdom is. As citizens of this great country we are used to democracy where we vote for our leaders, a system which was first established by the Presbyterian Church through John Calvin and John Knox and then carried over to this country and put into our constitution by Witherspoon the founder of Princeton. Was

I just bragging? But we are not used to a kingdom where the one in power has absolute power. That is what we are saying when we pray this prayer. God's kingdom is a kingdom, not a democracy. God has absolute power which is invested in him because He is the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in it. This is what David was telling his people.

God is the king of this kingdom. Sometimes there is a sense that God is waiting for us to do certain things, that if we were just moral enough, that if we were just good enough, if we could just lay out the ground work for God's kingdom then he would be ready to come. Sometimes we think that Jesus has not come back because we are not ready for him, meaning we have not done enough to prepare the earth for him. Uh, no, that is not the way that it works. God's kingdom is not waiting to come until we get it right. We will never get it right.

Sober historians and wise theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr remind us to be very careful about assigning too much to any period in history. So when you hear someone say, or when you say yourself, that we are in a time in history when we have distanced ourselves from God more than ever, no, we have always been separated from God and today we have not contributed to the morality of the world any more or any less than we did 50 years ago. The world is no worse in God's eyes today than it was when you were growing up, nor is it better. This is important because it places the kingdom of God squarely upon God as the king of that kingdom.

Thy kingdom **Come**. We can all agree that God's kingdom is not here, but as Christians one of our motivating hopes is that the kingdom absolutely will come. That is why we say with the Christian ancestors: Maranatha, come Lord Jesus! And we say it with a certainty and hope that is not tied to any time or any historical events as if we could predict, but it is tied to the promises of God that His kingdom will come, but it is not here yet. Jesus tells those who are obeying his commandments in Mark 12:34 that they are not far from the kingdom of God. Jesus tells his disciples in Luke 17:20-21 that he is the kingdom of God among them.

When we look at Jesus we proclaim that the kingdom of God has come and it will come again. When we break bread and drink juice together in communion it is a proclamation to the world that Jesus is coming back again and our Christian hope is wrapped up in Jesus coming back again to establish his kingdom here on this earth. When we pray your kingdom come, it is personal because the kingdom of God demands our will, our heart, our life. We should be praying together: Lord, revive your church, beginning with me. Amen.