

“Praying With Jesus: May Your Kingdom Come”

Amos 8:4-7 and Matthew 6:10a

(www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=amos+8:4-7) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:10a)

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“Believe in miracles!”

Jesus said: “Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed by Your name. Your kingdom come...” Matthew 6:9-10a NRSV (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:9-10a)

Jesus’ Prayer: A Uniting Force

Whether you are a Palestinian Christian or a Messianic Jew the uniting part of your worship is the Lord’s Prayer. Whether you are a practicing Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant, the uniting part of your worship of God is the Lord’s Prayer. I have prayed Jesus’ prayer in a Syrian Orthodox Church in Bethlehem. I have prayed this prayer under a stilt house in Trinidad. Jesus’ prayer transcends geography, race, national affiliation, economics, or education. Unfortunately we cannot all gather at the Lord’s Table, but we can all kneel with Jesus and pray Jesus’ prayer.

In this sermon, I want us to acknowledge that the one uniting factor in God’s present Kingdom on earth is the Lord’s Prayer. Therefore, we must not participate in this prayer through rote memory. The Lord’s Prayer is not some ritual to be fulfilled on a weekly basis. As a Christ follower you can recognize this prayer summarizes of all Jesus’ teaching. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection are symbolized in this prayer. Jesus’ prayer is a daily reminder of our primary citizenship. When you pray Jesus’ prayer you are acknowledging your first allegiance is to God’s Kingdom.

Jesus is our one hope for God’s peace in this troubled world. When you pray Jesus’ prayer you are uniting together with Christ followers around the globe declaring that in and through Jesus Christ there is hope for a better world. When you believe that hope then you are willing to work for God’s Kingdom right now.

Jesus’ Prayer: God’s peace in a time of trouble

The disciples did not gather around Jesus on the northern slope of the Sea of Galilee in a perfectly peaceful world. Jesus taught his disciples to pray in the midst of chaos, turmoil, and rebellion. The First Century world of Jesus and his disciples was fraught with danger and filled with violence.

During Jesus boyhood a Jewish rebellion against Roman occupation ended with hundreds of Jewish men crucified all along the main road leading through the Jezreel valley.

When Jesus told the disciples that the Kingdom of God was among them, Jesus spoke to a world that was fallen away from God’s original intent. Jesus knew that the Evil One was strong. Jesus knew that terror, violence, pain, and suffering were a way of life for many people. Yet, Jesus still declared that God’s Kingdom was beginning to happen among them.

When Jesus prayed this prayer the Jewish world was fragmented and deeply divided. If you think our divisions between the Democrats, Republicans, and Libertarians are crazy, you are right! But, our conflicting parties are nothing compared to the religious/political parties of Jesus’ day. Allow me to list just the major groups!

- **The Zealots** were a clandestinely organized terrorist group. Their mission was to kill as many Romans as they could before getting killed. It was the Zealots who sparked the Galilean rebellion during Jesus’ boyhood. Biblical scholars conjecture that Judas Iscariot was a Zealot. The Zealots were the First Century equivalent to the many terrorist groups in our world today located in Ireland, Asia, both sides of the Green line in Israel/Palestine, and in America.

- **The Essenes** were a group of men and women who withdrew from the normal life of First Century Judaism. They believed the Temple worship was profaned. They wanted nothing to do with the Romans or the Jews who accommodated to them. The Essenes lived in the area of Qum Ran on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. Biblical scholars conjecture that John the Baptist was an Essene. We know them today as the Dead Sea scrolls community. A modern day equivalent to the ancient Essenes might be the Amish.
- **The Pharisees** were a group that believed in the strict adherence to the Laws of Moses. They were the ancient fundamentalists. They truly believed that if all Jews would obey all 679 laws of Moses on the same day, God's Kingdom would come upon the earth. The Apostle Paul was a strong Pharisee before meeting Christ Jesus on the Damascus Road. Wherever you find a person who places more importance in God's law than God's grace, you have a modern day Pharisee.
- **The Sadducees** were the Temple priests and Jerusalem leaders who collaborated with the Romans. They had purchased their positions from King Herod and were noted for being accommodating. They would do anything to keep their political and economic power. Modern day pragmatists are descendents of the Sadducees. Wherever you have someone whose religious doctrine is, "the end justifies the means," you have a Sadducee on your hands.
- **The Samaritans** were the outcasts. They lived in what we call the West Bank territories and were considered by First Century Jews to be worse than Gentiles and Gentiles were considered to be dogs. The Samaritans were hated because they were of a mixed racial background. Their descendents had remained on the land and intermarried after the exiles of 721 and 586 B.C. Modern day outcasts are people who are marginalized by race, gender, economic status, or national origin.

I have only listed for you the major groups active on the day Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Jesus had no illusions that this world was a safe place. Jesus knew that this world is a fallen world where evil is real, suffering is the norm, and death is assured. Jesus knew that people became fragmented around ideology. Jesus knew that self-centeredness is rampant among human beings. Jesus looked at the world as it is and taught a prayer that can help us work with God to build a world that is better.

Until September 11, 2001's terrible tragedy Americans lived in an illusory world. Many people believed evil was a Hollywood fantasy. Among many people evil was a four-letter word never to be used in public. However, when President Bush appropriately named as evil the horrific acts of persons on airplanes in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, the word came into public use again.

Surely the senseless violence perpetrated against innocent people on such a large scale is evil. But, evil is more than that. Evil is any person or group who subscribes to the idea that the end justifies the means. Evil shows up in prejudicial attitudes against a group of people because of the actions of some of the people. We must guard against demonizing any group of people.

Evil comes in many forms. Some evil actions are subtle and deceitful. Some of the evil actions are loud and horrific. All of the time evil can be identified as a force of destruction, a power of fragmentation, and the cause of disease and death. The Evil One is working to destroy God's world. Jesus knew this truth. And, Jesus told his disciples to pray because God's victorious kingdom is coming.

Jesus' Prayer: The Kingdom is coming

Perhaps one of the reasons we do not like to talk about Evil is that we are afraid of it. We prefer to keep our heads in the sand and hope the Evil will not get too close to us. We get uneasy when we read Holy Scripture telling us that:

“Our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12 NRSV) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=ephesians+6:12)

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray there was no denial of the forces of evil at work in the world. Jesus confronted evil and to the amazement of his disciples, Jesus overcame evil. Jesus promised that God's Kingdom was now present and the power to overcome evil was available to every true follower of God.

Jesus brings to you God's Kingdom Power

“If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you.”

Matthew 12:28 (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+12:28)

The religious authorities did not want a person who could defeat evil among them. They charged Jesus with cooperating with Beelzebul. Jesus challenged them to act reasonably. No reasonable person expects a divided house to stand. Jesus tells them that the power to defeat evil rests in God's Kingdom that is now among them.

For whatever reason, only God knows, God chose to place a limit upon God's power and created this world to give us freedom of choice. God even gave us the freedom to choose for God or against God. Unfortunately many people through the centuries have chosen to empower the forces by choosing against God. Evil exists because we empower it by choosing to reject God.

God did not choose to allow evil a free hand; however. God chose to send Jesus Christ his only Son into the world that we might have the power to overcome evil. God chose to bring about a new earth by infusing this earth with the power of heaven through Jesus Christ. Look at the cross and you will see the way God chose to defeat evil. Where is God when the forces of evil strike at our country, our community, our church, or our friends? God is where God always is—with the people who are in pain and suffering. Look at the empty cross and you will see the miracle of God's work among us.

- God takes suffering and redeems it.
- God takes violence and rebukes it.
- God takes death and defeats it.

As a Christ follower, you are a member of God's heavenly Kingdom present on earth right now. As a Christ follower you know that hope will win out over despair, love overcomes fear, and God's peace is eternal. When you pray Jesus' prayer you step into the circle of God's peace that is available to each and every Christ follower.

As a Christ follower you carry the most important passport available in this world. Anyone who travels with me overseas knows my set speech about hanging onto your United States passport. Loose all your money, but do not loose your passport. Loose your clothes, your credit cards, even your medicine, but do not loose your passport! However, let me say to you now that there is a passport more important than your American passport. As a Christ follower you carry a passport declaring you to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. When you pray Jesus' prayer for the Kingdom of God to come within your life, you are declaring to the world an ultimate allegiance. When you carry the passport of a citizen of the Kingdom of God you choose to live life on a higher moral plane. When you carry the Kingdom of God's passport you have certain citizen requirements!

Jesus' Prayer: Requirements of Kingdom Citizens

A child like spirit:

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:3 (NRSV) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+18:3)

A citizen of God's Kingdom trusts God completely. We might not understand the whys and wherefores of what is happening, but we will trust God. Like a child we will put our hand in the hand of a Loving Father God and trust that God will not leave us or forsake us. Kingdom citizens trust God with their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

A forgiving spirit:

“Then Peter came and said to Jesus, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy seven times.” Matthew 18:21-22 (NRSV) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+18:21-22)

A citizen of the Kingdom of God knows that God is a just God who will provide the proper punishment. Vengeance belongs to God, not to us. As Christ followers we are called to pray for our enemies. As horrific as the acts of evil are around the world, as angry and upset as I get, I know that my challenge from God is to pray for those persons who are deluded, filled with evil, and lost in deception. My calling is to pray for them to find the true God who is the Father of peace and the Creator of love.

An obedient spirit

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

Matthew 10:37-39 (NRSV) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+10:37-39)

A Kingdom of God citizen lives and breathes to love God and lovingly do the work of God. The obedient action is not done from duty, guilt, fear, or shame. Our obedience to God and our willingness to do the work of God so that God’s Kingdom on earth might grow comes from a motivation of love. God loved me enough to offer me strength to overcome evil, power to live beyond my sin, and grace that continually forgives me even to eternity. Surely in the face of God’s incredible mysterious love, my response is to love in return. When my primary obedience is to God, then the love of God flows into me and through me to all the other loves in my life.

A spirit of peace

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Matthew 5:9 (NRSV)

(www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+5:9)

Jesus promises that peacemakers are declared sons and daughters of God. Obviously, peacemaking is a critical requirement of a Christ follower. We are called to live above the “end justifies the means” pragmatic ethic. Anyone can name the name of God. Many people throughout the centuries have done horrific things in the name of God. Jesus reminded us that many people would do things in his name, but not be citizens of God’s Kingdom. We are called personally and corporately to rise above the pragmatic, self-centered ethic of “the end justifies the means”. We are called to be peacemakers. We are called to share God’s peace in our homes, in our community, and in our world.

Jesus’ prayer: a gift to a Kingdom citizen

Now is the time that Kingdom Citizens need to stand up and proclaim the power of God to overcome evil. Now is the time for Christ followers to not only pray Jesus’ prayer, but to live it. By praying for God’s Kingdom to come in our midst we proclaim to the world that:

- We are a part of the fellowship of the unashamed!
- We have the Holy Spirit's power!
- The die is cast.
- We have stepped over the line.
- The decision has been made-We are Jesus’ followers!
- We won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.
- Our past is redeemed, our present makes sense, and our future is secure.
- We are finished with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.
- We no longer need preeminence, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity.
- We don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded.
- We now live by faith, depend on Jesus’ presence, walk by patience, celebrate God’s daily miracles, are uplifted by Jesus’ prayer, and live with Spirit power.
- That's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.
- That’s what it means to be a Kingdom citizen.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed by Your name. Your kingdom come in my life, today!”

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Foundational Scripture: Matthew 6:10a

Featured Scripture Reflection: “Pray in this way: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come...’” (Matthew 6:9-10a NRSV) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:9-10a)

Opening Icebreaker: Name one reason you are happy to be an American.

Scripture Questions

What is the scripture saying?

- How is Jesus’ prayer a unifying force for the Christian Church worldwide?
- Jesus recognizes the fact of evil in our world. How does Jesus statement of God’s Kingdom being in the world right now challenge the power of evil?
- What was the political/religious life like in the time of Jesus?
- What is the power promised to Kingdom Citizens by Jesus?

How is your life touched?

- What are the requirements of a Kingdom Citizen?
- Which requirement is most challenging to you?
- Where is your life most vulnerable to the Evil One?
- What is most important to you about carrying a Kingdom Passport?

What is God’s invitation to you?

- Jesus invites you to pray in community and individually following the phrases and form of Jesus’ prayer. When you think of God’s Kingdom becoming real in your life, what do you most want to see happen? How can the group support your vision?

What can you pray for?

Pray that Chilson Hills will be a joyous, faithful, praying community of God’s incredible resurrection power celebrating Jesus Christ’s transforming hope and love in order to help grow God’s Kingdom on earth.

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