



Sermon, October 2, 2016
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

The Prayer That Changes Us: “Thy Kingdom Come”

Matthew 6:9-13

Young's Literal Translation (YLT)

9 thus therefore pray ye: `Our Father who [art] in the heavens! hallowed be Thy name.

10 `Thy reign come: Thy will come to pass, as in heaven also on the earth.

11 `Our appointed bread give us to-day.

12 `And forgive us our debts, as also we forgive our debtors.

13 `And mayest Thou not lead us to temptation, but deliver us from the evil, because Thine is the reign, and the power, and the glory -- to the ages. Amen.

Opening Story: Dinner Guests

Someone submitted the following story to a magazine: My wife invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to our six-year-old daughter and said, “Would you like to say the blessing?” “I wouldn’t know what to say,” she replied. “Just say what you hear Mommy say.” So our daughter bowed her head and said, “Dear Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?”

When you invite someone to visit or for dinner, what do you do to prepare? Don’t you fix things up a bit, sweep the floors, pick up the laundry, gather the magazines together? You make them feel comfortable and welcome, right? Now imagine what you would need to do if your dinner guest was someone like the president of the United States. Imagine all the preparations you would need to make. Obviously, there would be a lot of security arrangements. But you would want to put your best foot forward, right? And what if your guest was someone like the Queen of England? Think of all the protocols involved. Where do you stand when she enters? Who bows and curtsies to whom, and how low and how long, and if you are an American citizen, but she comes to visit anyway what do you do?

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Dinner guests are all well and good, but let's notch things up a bit. When someone moves in and becomes part of the household, things will change. Your home will reflect their presence as well. Three years ago, Susan moved into my house in Pocatello, and things changed – and all for the good. We painted a couple of rooms, rearranged downstairs, put up a whole wall of bookshelves, and everywhere her touch was seen. It was beautiful, and it is because her presence made a difference. This summer Dawn-Hunter moved her things from Tennessee into her room with us in Junction City. Things changed. She took some of those things with her to her dorm, and things changed again.

Do you remember Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple*? Oscar and Felix are good friends, but they are about as different in temperament as night and day. Oscar is a slob, and Felix is obsessively orderly and clean. Two more opposite people can hardly be found. Felix moves in and starts cleaning up Oscar's act and house, with hilarious results. Now, imagine what that play would look like if instead of Oscar, the house was yours, and instead of Felix, it was God who moved in. What would God start to clean up and rearrange? What might God do to the neighborhood? The Town? The State? The nation? The world?

This isn't an idle exercise or just a humorous thought. When we pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” we are asking God to *come in to our lives, and be at home*.

Let's look briefly at that phrase, “Thy Kingdom come.” In the original Greek, it is ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου. The Greek word *basileia* is often translated as kingdom or dominion. But if you listened closely to this morning's reading, the Young's Literal Translation reads “Thy reign come.” This is actually much closer to the meaning of *basileia*. *Basileia* refers to a sphere of influence, royal power, dominion, rule. *Basileia* is “not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom.” In referring to the reign of God, *basileia* reflects God's state of being, glory, influence.

But even more important in the phrase is the Greek word, *elthetō*, “Come.” This word is in the imperative, “come.” Invitation to enter. More

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like a command to enter. And notice, Jesus doesn't tell us to pray that God's reign might “come to pass,” but rather we are to imperatively ask for God to enter. Enter what? Well, our lives, our world, our home, our neighborhood, our church.

Remember a moment ago when I had you imagine the Queen of England visiting your house? When you invite a ruler in, things are going to change. But even more so when that ruler is moving in to stay. When we pray, “come,” the action is directed towards us and the world in which we live. When we invite God, we invite God's whole entourage as well: for instance, the Trinity. God the Son, incarnated as Jesus, will be there, saying and doing all the inconvenient things Jesus did. When God moves in, there will be an immediate housecleaning and rummage sale. If you think things changed for Oscar when Felix moved in, imagine what happens when God moves in.

We cannot pray “Thy kingdom come,” and not expect things to change. God changes things. It is in the nature of God to do that. There is not a place in the Bible that says, “I am the Lord your God. Don't change a thing you are doing. You are already so righteous I can't believe it. I think I'll model my behavior on how you all treat one another.” That just isn't in there. The reason people try to shut God off in a box or some corner of the universe is that God is just too darn inconvenient.

When we pray, Thy Kingdom come, we are saying, “Move on in God, enter my house, enter my life, enter my world.” And when God moves in what can we expect? If we invite God to enter our lives, and the life of the world, which is what we are doing when we say “Thy Kingdom come,” we can't expect God to be a silent observer. If we invite any ruler into our homes, they will remain a ruler. We don't invite them in and then hog-tie them and tape their mouth. When we invite God in, things are going to change. What does God expect of us? What characterizes the reign of God? Look up these passages from the Bible:

- “The LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the Great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and

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loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.” (Deuteronomy 10:17-18)

- “God has showed you, O people, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)
- Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8)
- This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)
- But as he who called you is holy, you also must be holy in all your conduct, (1 Peter 1:15)
- Psalm 25:8, "Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore He instructs sinners in the way."
- Psalm 119:68, "You are good and do good. Teach me Your statutes."
- Psalm 86:5, "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You."
- Daniel 9:9, "To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him."
- Psalm 86:15, "But Thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth."
- Ps. 140:12 I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.
- Pr. 14:31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

That’s some mighty powerful housecleaning isn’t it? When God moves in, things are going to change. But here’s the thing: the change will always be for the better.

Thy Kingdom come.

Come in, Lord Jesus. Welcome home.