



St. Mary's Church SAWSTON

Open Door: 4th October The Lord's Prayer: "Your Kingdom Come"

Welcome and Notices

At home, at work, at school, in the garden, in the street, in church, on zoom, in our hearts and all around us: God is with us.

God is with us

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4. 9,10

Lord, teach each of us about your kingdom of love. **Amen**

Song: The Kingdom Train

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkUJyE0O67k>

Song: Thy Kingdom Come

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWhL6v8oQZ0>

Reading: Mark 12:28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "Is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Confession

Loving God, we know that many are the times we fail to love you and we fail to love our neighbours, whom you love.

(We keep a short silence before God)

Lord forgive us

Lord forgive us

Song: Hear the Call of The Kingdom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

Talk: Sara Merritt

Your Kingdom Come

So we're now coming to the line of the Lord's Prayer where we say "Your Kingdom Come".

I talked about this in July!! We thought about the hope of the kingdom, what waiting for the kingdom is like

(do you remember? We thought about harvest, a slave being freed, and a woman giving birth), and what difference that hope might make to our lives.

We said that the hope of the kingdom might inspire us to live as our true, beautiful selves, in relationship with God, confident of the future.

So what do we talk about today?!

Well, shall we dig a little more into what we are asking for when we pray Let Your Kingdom Come?

We'll start thinking about the Kingdom, and then about the King.

Take a moment to bring up a picture in your head, or some key words, of what the Kingdom means to you.

Kingdom

First of all, what does Kingdom mean?

Who?

If we look through Matthew's gospel we read lots and lots of what Jesus said about the kingdom of heaven.

It's beautiful, like a field of flowers, and fruitful like a vineyard. Money and status isn't important, but the poor and the persecuted are. It's a topsy-turvy kingdom where children are citizens, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. It is also, bizarrely, ever-expanding, like a mustard tree or a pot of yeast! It is the best thing ever, worth giving up everything for. And it lasts forever.

It's also difficult to get into. The pharisees and teachers of the law thought that the kingdom was Israel, freed from the Romans perhaps, and perhaps pure and free of unlawfulness, and they thought they would be at the forefront of that kingdom.

But Jesus says again and again in Matthew that those who thought they knew about the kingdom were wrong, because they were all words but no action. He explain this with the parable of the brothers in chapter 21 – one told his father that he would work for him, but stayed in bed, while his brother said he wouldn't work, but went and did a day's work. Jesus says that the ones who do the work, not just the talking, will be welcomed in the kingdom.

And similarly, in chapter 22, he gives another image, of a wedding banquet, where the ones who were invited didn't turn up, so their seats were given to other, unexpected people.

So Jesus says the kingdom is not for those who think they're wise, but for those who do what is good. It may not be for those who think they have a place by right, who are complacent about it, but for those who are desperate to be there with the King.

It's odd, isn't it, that Jesus never talks about it as a place – he mostly talks about who is in and who is out of the kingdom... as if the kingdom is a group of people, perhaps.. Yes, I think that makes sense... Just as the church is the people not the building, so the Kingdom is a people, not a country...

When?

But we should also recognise that there's also an element of the kingdom of heaven as a time, or an event. A lot of the way the stories are written in Matthew harks back to the book of Daniel, where there's some really important imagery of an eternal kingdom. Before that in the Bible the kingdom mostly means the political kingdom of Israel, the nation, but in Daniel it's different. In

chapter 7 Daniel has an apocalyptic vision, with the Son of Man riding in on clouds to replace the boastful and warlike kings and claim an everlasting kingdom.

“the sovereignty, power and greatness of **all** kingdoms under the **whole** heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High, His kingdom will be everlasting and all rulers will worship and obey him. This kingdom will endure from generation to generation”

So maybe the Kingdom is the apocalypse?! If you ever read the apocalyptic bits of the Bible and think “Oh yes, that seems to be what’s happening right now” you’re not alone and you’re not the first! We’ve been doing that, I think, for as long as we’ve been reading the Bible. And who knows, perhaps this time it’s true! But I’m not sure that kind of thinking actually does us any good – it may in fact make us more like the people Jesus said wouldn’t be welcome in the kingdom.. what do you think?...

There are three ways to think about the ‘when’ of the Kingdom of God: first, we can think about it as “pie in the sky when we die” – that is, a heaven that we go to (or perhaps only some of us do) when we die, where everything is lovely and possibly we have wings. Second, we can think of it as something which will happen on earth after an apocalyptic event which resets the earth and allows God to be in charge and people to live happily together. Thirdly, we can think of it as something immediate. In this view, we think of the Kingdom as wherever God reigns, so that if we treat God as our King, that means his Kingdom is in our hearts and lives.

We really don’t know which of these Jesus meant when he told us to pray “Let your kingdom come”. Most people these days who haven’t thought about it very carefully would probably say that heaven is “where you go when you die if you’re good”. I think Matthew, writing in first century Palestine, probably thought it was the political apocalypse envisioned by Daniel. It seems to me that the third option, which might inspire us to good lives now, in which we see ourselves as vessels, carriers and spreaders of the Kingdom, is probably the most helpful view, which makes a difference.

Jesus asks us to pray “Let your kingdom come” – this isn’t a throwaway line, any more than any of the others. This is a strong and scary prayer. It is basically “Bring it on!” It’s us saying We trust you, God, even though we’re not quite sure what the Kingdom is! We’ll do our best to treat you as our King! What you say, God, goes...That’s what we’re saying when we pray this line. Let your kingdom come!

King

Now, let’s unpack a little bit more about what it means for God to be our King.

Do you see God as King? We’ve been talking about names of God recently – was that one of them? What images does “King” bring up? Hmm

We don’t have a king, do we? We have a queen but she doesn’t do an awful lot of ruling. I don’t think her current role was quite what the Bible writers had in mind, do you? But even when Kings and Queens had more power, I’m not sure their role was particularly godlike.. It seems a very remote description of God to me – a person who is far above the normal people of a country, who is in charge and makes rules and perhaps makes the society work... although in England I think kings were mostly landowners trying to make themselves richer and more powerful, weren’t they? Did they actually care about the people they ruled over? We are, in fact, in the modern world, not very familiar with what it actually means to have a king. We just know it from stories, and those stories are generally not very positive.

So what does it say in the Bible? There’s a very interesting passage in 1 Samuel 8 when Israel asked God for a king. Before this time, Israel was led by various people who were kind of proxies for God. At this time Samuel was the leader, appointed by God and trying to speak for God. When

the people asked Samuel to make them a king so that they could be like all the other nations, God said to Samuel “It’s not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king”. Wow. Then the LORD tells them what it will be like to have a king like all the other nations – he will take all the best of the land for himself and in effect make the people his slaves. That is not the kind of king God is, apparently!

Let’s read a Psalm together which might give us some insight into the kind of king our God is.

Psalm 145.

Now that sounds much more like the God we know, and the God that Jesus talks about A king who has compassion on all he has made.

A king who is righteous in all his ways and **near to all** who call on him in truth, a king who watches over all who love him.

It doesn’t in any sense sound like any human king I’ve ever heard of – I’m not quite sure why they’ve used the word King except in the sense that he leads the nation – that is, they are united behind him and follow his guidance, he’s in charge. But this is a king who is near to his people as well as in charge. A king who walks beside his people in compassion and generosity, showing them and inspiring them to be a society, a kingdom, where love is the driving force behind everything.

This fits, I think, with Jesus talking about humility being important in the kingdom. Perhaps our God is not in fact a king who sits on a golden throne waving his sceptre, but one who walks with his children and carries their burdens, whilst leading them in the right ways.

In fact, by His Spirit, this King is so close to us that he is in us, if we will invite him to reign in our hearts.

If that’s the kind of King we’re talking about, I say “Bring it on! Let Your Kingdom Come!”

Thoughts to take away

Let’s continue to think about what our image of God as King is and how that affects our lives. Do you consider yourself to be a member of God’s kingdom, God’s eternal and ever-expanding kingdom?

Blessing

May God our King: Creator, Servant and Inspiration

Be in front of us, beside us and within us.

Where we sit, when we rise and as we go out

May your Kingdom Come.

Amen.

Prayers: Rachel Norridge

Followed by the Lord’s Prayer. We say together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

Song: Mercies (New Every Morning)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYyZCCs5bJc&list=RDTYyZCCs5bJc&start_radio=1&t=0

In brokenness and wandering

Through all my fear and unbelief
Your faithfulness appears to me again
Through mountain top and valley low
In every season this I know
Your goodness like the dawn will break again

All Your mercies rise
In this heart again
And my soul begins to sing

*They are new every morning
New every morning
Great is Your faithfulness
Your mercies are new every morning
New every morning
Great is Your faithfulness*

Every good and perfect gift
In Your endless grace You give
Flowing from the Father's heart to mine
Beams of Heaven as I go
Through this wilderness below
The fullness of Your love for all of time

Blessing

Breakout Rooms

Time to catch up and share fellowship together.