

Your Kingdom Come

Series: Teach us to Pray

Date: 3 May 2020, 3rd Sunday after Easter

Location: St George's Online

Texts: Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 6:25-34

What were you hoping for before coronavirus hit? We were looking forward to a holiday after Easter. A friend of mine was hanging out for an upturn in particular stock. Maybe you were looking for recovery from an illness. Or that a broken relationship might be restored. On a bigger picture maybe you were hoping for lasting action globally on climate change. Peace in Syria and the Middle East. An end to human trafficking. In many ways coronavirus has put our hopes under a microscope: both our personal hopes and our hopes for the world around us. When life is out of control and so uncertain, our hopes can shrink to just getting through the day. We need to rest, but my hopes for a holiday are not nearly so important as some of those other personal and global issues. Hope is all about what we want for the future. Whether you are a Christian or not, we all have hopes for the future.

Viktor Frankl was a Jewish doctor who survived the death camps in World War II. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, he explored why it was that under such horrific conditions some people seemed to stay strong and kind while others gave up.

Frankl writes,

The prisoner who had lost faith in the future - his future - was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay.¹

We need hope to survive. Without it we wither and die.

In prayer we ask God to act for the future. This week we're looking at the petition, Your Kingdom Come. In teaching us to pray, *Your Kingdom Come*, Jesus is teaching us what to hope for. It's a hope that is big enough to address the great problems of the world like poverty and climate change, and yet personal enough to meet our longings for love and peace. So what does it mean to pray *Your Kingdom Come*? And how might God answer this prayer?

Your Kingdom Come refers to the Kingdom of God, or in Matthew's gospel the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus' first words in Mark's gospel are, *The time has come. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news!* The kingdom was always on Jesus' lips. Isaiah 11 paints a vision of this kingdom.

with righteousness he will judge the needy,

with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

It's a vision of justice. It's a vision of peace and harmony between all creatures - man and beast, predator and prey. Nature is no longer red in tooth and claw.

¹ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Washington Square Press, 1984, 95

The wolf will live with the lamb,
 the leopard will lie down with the goat,
 the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
 and a little child will lead them.
 They will neither harm nor destroy
 on all my holy mountain,
 for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
 as the waters cover the sea.

This vision of the kingdom of God is a world of justice where everything that is wrong with the world has been put right. A world of deep peace, where all that is broken has been made whole.

Maybe you're young. You want to change the world. Maybe you're old. You've seen more disappointment, but you still want what has been broken mended. This is what we long for isn't it? That's what we pray for when we pray, *Your Kingdom Come*.

The question is how will God answer this prayer, *Your Kingdom Come*? How will he bring in his kingdom of justice and peace? Again, Isaiah gives us the answer. Through his chosen king.

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
 from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

This is a poetic way of speaking about a descendent of Israel's great king David, the son of Jesse.

- 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
 the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
 the Spirit of counsel and of power,
 the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—
3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Jesus is great king David's greater son. He is the one who will judge the needy with righteousness and with justice give decisions for the poor of the earth. It is through Him that God's kingdom comes because he is the King.

How does Jesus bring in God's kingdom? Through his cross, his reign and his return. On the cross Jesus defeated the great enemies of sin and death and rescued us from their power. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father where he reigns over the history of this world until he has put all his enemies under his feet. One day he will return in glory, as we say in the creed, to judge the living and the dead and his *kingdom* will have no end. That day will be a day of justice, where all that is wrong will be put right. That will be a day when the whole creation will be renewed, cleansed of all that taints it in the fire of his judgment, to use the picture from 2 Peter. What Isaiah saw dimly will be realized on that day.

We pray *Your Kingdom Come*, because to bring in the Kingdom of God is something only God can do. It is beyond us. It's a prayer for Jesus to come and make all things new. In praying *Your Kingdom Come*, we surrender our attempts to remake the world. We submit to his rule because we recognise we judge with *our* eyes and decide by what *we* hear, and not with his perfect justice and righteousness. To pray *Your Kingdom Come* is to ask Jesus to shape our hopes by his vision for the Kingdom.

And yet, to pray Your Kingdom Come is not to sit on your hands. To be a Christian is to follow Christ as your King. It means being a citizen of his Kingdom. As citizens of his Kingdom he calls us to follow his laws and work for his Kingdom. So work for justice and peace even as you look for his coming. That may be in a particular cause or place. It may be in your relationships. And we don't only work for the kingdom. We also want people to meet the King. Because the kingdom grows as its citizens increase. So invite people to meet the King and find the life and hope and purpose he offers. Maybe praying this prayer today might be a moment for you to meet the King.

Our great temptation is we can hope for too little. Small hopes turn into worries and anxieties about tomorrow. Praying *Your Kingdom Come* lifts our eyes to hope for what God has promised not only us but the whole creation. So Jesus tells us,
... do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.