

(God-Centered Praying) 4. the Kingdom of God

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of longing for God's kingdom to come, and the evidence of true spirituality is a desire to be centred in God and to see His Name glorified throughout the earth.

Scripture: Exodus 23:19, Proverbs 3:9, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 6:33, Mark 9:1, Luke 12:21, 2 Peter 3:13, 1 John 3:3

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "God-Centered Prayer"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of God-centered praying, particularly the petition 'Thy kingdom come.' He explains that true salvation leads to a desire to be free from self-centeredness, placing God at the center of our lives and prayers. Poonen highlights that a genuine longing for God's kingdom reflects a disgust for the evil in the world and a commitment to living righteously in preparation for Christ's return. He urges believers to examine their lives and ensure they are ready for the kingdom of God, which requires a heart that prioritizes God's glory and righteousness over personal comfort. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deep, authentic spirituality that seeks to honor God in every aspect of life.

Transcript

"Thy kingdom come"

True salvation should give us a longing to be delivered from self-centredness, so that God now becomes the centre of our lives and the centre of our petitions in prayer. We who were wrong side up at one time, have been straightened up by the Lord, so that we long to put God first in every area of our lives now.

One of the clearest evidences of true spirituality is that a man detests his self-centredness and longs to be totally centred in God.

The man who comes to God wanting to be centred in Him says, "Our Father, who art in heaven. The greatest longing in my heart is that Your Name will be glorified and revered throughout the earth." Then he realizes that God's Name is not being revered on earth and so he goes on to the next petition and says, "Father, I am longing for You to come and establish Your kingdom on earth so that all the earth will fear and reverence Your Name."

That's a prayer that all men and women of God have been praying for over 1900 years. The time has now drawn near for it to be answered.

A Kingdom of Righteousness

Only one who is disgusted with the evil in this world can pray this prayer. Peter says, "We are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Look at the violence and immorality that there is in the world today. As we read the newspapers, one of the main prayers that should ascend from our hearts is, "Father, I long for Your kingdom to come. I am not asking this for my personal comfort. I long that your reign of righteousness will come soon, so that Your Name will be glorified on this earth which was created for Your glory."

Jesus said that the last days would be like the days of Noah. Noah was one righteous man in the midst of a corrupt and evil world. He was a preacher of righteousness and he must have been disgusted with what he saw around him. (2 Pet. 2:5). He longed for righteousness from the depth of his heart, and he preached it without compromise. And his prayer must have been a similar one, "Thy kingdom come."

All believers will acknowledge that Christ is coming back soon to establish His kingdom on earth. But what is the evidence that we really believe this? It says in 1 John 3:3, "And every one who has this hope fixed in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

The proof that we really believe in Christ's return is that we get ready, preparing ourselves as a bride for her bridegroom. This will mean a clean life, it will mean paying our debts, it will mean settling our quarrels - right now, because we are purifying ourselves as He is pure. Only such a man can pray this prayer, "Thy kingdom come."

To repeat this prayer without purifying ourselves to be ready for Christ's return, is to reduce this prayer to a ritual.

Perpetual Readiness for His Coming

Some denominations in Christendom have a prayer in their liturgy that says, "Lord, save me from sudden death." That prayer was obviously written by an unconverted man for unconverted people. Self-centred people naturally need some time before they die, in order to settle their quarrels and to pay their debts, etc., before they face their Maker. They have no intention of settling these matters as long as they are healthy. Such people have no fear of God, and can never be converted until they repent of their self-centredness.

A true Christian never needs to pray such a prayer, because he is always ready. His accounts are always up-to-date. And therefore he can always pray, "Thy kingdom come."

How can we know if we're really eager for the kingdom of God to come? Let's consider just one area - our home life.

Suppose one morning, as you looked out of your window, you saw the Lord Jesus Christ Himself walking towards your house. What would your reaction be? That's a fairly good test of whether you are ready for the coming of God's kingdom or not.

Would you have to run and hide some of those books in your library, because you don't want Jesus to see them. You'd probably have to hide your TV set too, if you have one.

As long as Jesus is staying with you, your conversation will no longer consist of the regular gossip that usually characterizes your meal-table fellowship.

Would you have to be specially careful to be kind and courteous during those days to your family-members and to your servants, avoiding the rude remarks that normally characterise your speech?

Would you be happy to let the Lord meet all your friends, or would you hope that some of them don't visit you while Jesus is with you?

Would you be glad to let Jesus stay on with you for ever and ever like that? Or would you heave a sigh of relief when at last His visit has come to an end and He is gone?

Be honest with yourself.

One way of knowing the answer to that question is by asking ourselves if our behaviour at home is any different when we have guests staying with us, whom we want to impress. If so, how much more different our behaviour would have to be if Jesus Himself came to stay with us for a few days!

It is meaningless to pray, "Thy kingdom come" if we don't want Jesus to live with us and be Lord of our homes everyday. After all, the kingdom of God is a place where Jesus is going to be present as Lord all the time - and not just for a few days. If it's going to be a strain having Him in our home for just a few days, how are we going to spend eternity with Him?

Treasures in Heaven

The man who prays, "Thy kingdom come" is one who has set his mind and his affection and his desires on things above. He's not one who has put on a dress of Christianity and holiness. His spirituality is not superficial. It goes right through to the very fibre of his being. He is more interested in laying up treasures in heaven than treasures on this earth.

A Christian's attitude to money is one of the clearest tests of his spiritual level, and of whether he is really longing for the kingdom of God to come or not.

I remember hearing a story of a farmer who told his wife one day, "Our cow has just given birth to two calves, one a white one and the other a brown one. And I thought that when they've grown up, we should give one of them to the Lord." His wife asked him, "Which one are you going to give to the Lord, the brown one or the white one?" He replied, "Well, we can decide that later when they grow up."

The calves grew up and they became fatter and fatter. One day the farmer came home with a sad face and told his wife, "I've got sad news for you. The Lord's calf just died." And his wife said, "But how did you know which was going to be the Lord's calf. You hadn't decided on that yet." He said, "Oh well, all along I had it in my mind to give the brown calf to the Lord; and it just died this morning."

It is like that with most believers. It's always the Lord's calf that dies! They give God what's left over after all their own needs have been met. And because they're not "rich towards God" they remain spiritually poor all their lives (Lk. 12:21).

In the Old Testament God had made a law that the Israelites had to give their "choice firstfruits" to the Lord (Exod. 23:19). This was the only way they could "honour the Lord" (Prov. 3:9). It's the same today. We cannot honour the Lord if we don't give Him our best.

What do we find in our life? Is there always some excuse why we cannot give the best to God. Then it shows where our heart really is. Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also.

But the man who prays, "Thy kingdom come," is a man who has been delivered from the love of money and material things. He lives for God and for eternity now.

The Absolute Rulership of God

The kingdom of God means the government of God, the absolute rulership of God. It means making Jesus Christ absolute Lord over every area of our life.

If we want the kingdom of God to come, it must first come in our hearts, in our homes, and in our churches. In these places we must give no place to Satan or to the flesh. Our longing should be that the kingdom of God should so fill our hearts, our homes and our churches that there will be no room there for anything else.

The Holy Spirit came to bring "the kingdom of God with power" to earth (Mark. 9:1). Our local churches should be a demonstration to the world today of what the kingdom of God is like - that which will one day cover the whole earth. Here is where we have failed the Lord.

When Jesus told us to seek God's kingdom first and not to be anxious about earthly things, what He meant was that if we really wanted to be anxious about something, we should be anxious that the kingdom of God should come on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:33). How many of us are burdened with that type of anxiety - for the purity of the church and the coming of God's kingdom?

May God find many among us who will seek His kingdom first.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/god-centered-praying-4-the-kingdom-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net