

“Your Kingdom Come” — Matthew 6:9

America has become a very dangerous country for children. The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse reported that in a 5-year period the number of child abuse deaths increased 38%. Three reports came out of one city, Milwaukee. One is the account of a man who spiked his baby’s formula with a lethal dose of methadone. The second told of a woman who killed her boyfriend’s grandson by feeding him prescription drugs. A third case was a woman who shut off a feeding tube to her severely disabled grandson. And in the panhandle of Texas a woman killed five of her children and the daughter of her cousin because she enjoyed receiving condolences. What kind of a country is this where such things can happen?

Then there are the rapes. While the statistics are shocking, the damage to women’s lives is heartbreaking and the behavior of the rapists is downright disgusting.

Follow the reports of drug abuse, gang violence, racial intolerance, exorbitant CEO salaries in companies underpaying and laying off ordinary workers, corruption in government or abortions because pregnancies don’t fit vacation plans. Who is in charge? What is going on?

Is it better elsewhere? In South Africa apartheid demeaned and disenfranchised a majority of the people because of the color of their skin. In the Middle East hatred exists that dates back for centuries. In South America drug cartels have more money and power than the government.

It is no wonder that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “your kingdom come”! The kingdom of God is different from the kingdoms of this world. The kingdom of God is just and fair, righteous and perfect. It is well worth praying for. And there are two different places for which I pray these words from Jesus — in my life and in my world.

There is one ingredient that is essential for a kingdom to be a kingdom. There must be a king. No king; no kingdom. Of course, just because

there is a king and a kingdom doesn’t mean it is *my* king or *my* kingdom.

Like many others I have traveled overseas and have visited in other countries that are kingdoms. One of those places was the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with King Hussein as the monarch. I’ve traveled the country, eaten their food, stayed in their hotels and spent money with King Hussein’s picture on it. But, he was and is not my king. That is not my kingdom.

We all live in God’s world. He is the Father of the heavens and the earth. He is the ultimate sovereign of the universe. But that doesn’t mean he’s my king.

When you or I become Christians we accept and acknowledge God’s kingship and rule in our lives. Being a Christian and praying the Lord’s Prayer is far more than saying, “God is King.” It is saying, “God is my king!” If God is not our king, then there is no way that God’s kingdom can ever come in our lives because kingdom requires a king!

When we use the word “kingdom” we are prone to think of it in terms of territory. But Jesus’ use of the word means “reign” or “rule” far more than it means a region. When he speaks of God’s “kingdom come” he refers to the royal rule of God in human lives more than he means a piece

of real estate with a border sign that says “Welcome to the Kingdom of God.”

When the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were admitted to the United Nations as independent sovereign nations they had already

suffered centuries of conquest and subjugation by most of their European neighbors. When they were forced into the Soviet Union they underwent enormous pressure to give up their language, religion and culture. Russian communism was the law and the language of the land. Hundreds of thousands were killed or exiled to Siberia, but the people never submitted in their hearts. Those who fled west started organizations to keep

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their traditions and politics alive. Those who stayed behind still spoke their own languages at home and maintained the culture from generation to generation. In other words, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reigned in their hearts even if Soviet communism ruled in their land.

Christians are those who have Jesus Christ reigning in our lives. Evil forces may control the land in which we live. The language spoken in the street may be anti-God. The law of the land may differ greatly from the laws of the kingdom of God. But God is reigning in our hearts.

When we pray “thy kingdom come” we are submitting to the reign and rule of God in our lives. That means that our first allegiance is not to the United States of America — either personally or politically. This is not always easy. Sometimes the pressures can be enormous. We have the culture drummed into us all day every day — “live for yourself”, violence, injustice, obscenity, dishonesty, immorality. It’s on TV, at school, at work, on billboards, in newspapers, everywhere. But Christians do not submit or conform. We pray “your kingdom come” into my life. God is our king. He gives us our orders. We live by his laws. We fight in his army. We speak his language. Our first love and loyalty is God our King!

I remember the day that my mother became an American citizen. She had lived in this country for many years, but always as an alien. (As a boy I would deliver her alien registration card to the post office every January.) When she switched her citizenship it was not by accident. It was a deliberate decision. It was a deliberate choice. She chose not only to become a citizen of this country; she chose to relinquish her citizenship in the country of her birth.

Now she is no longer an alien. She carries a United States passport. She votes in United States elections. She has all of the privileges and all the responsibilities of American citizenship.

The same is true for becoming a Christian. It is a conscious switch of allegiance from the way we were born to God himself. It happens on a specific day by a deliberate choice. We know whether we’ve done it or not.

Becoming a Christian is submitting to the reign of God in our lives. It means relinquishing

the reign of self or anyone else. God becomes our eternal king the day we become a Christian and join his kingdom.

Has God’s kingdom come to you? Are you a citizen of his reign? Did you make the deliberate conscious choice? Do you remember the day? If not, you have an invitation from the King himself. Decide today and tell his majesty King Jesus that you pledge your allegiance and submit to his reign. Pray, “thy kingdom come” — to me!

But Jesus had more than you and me in mind when he spoke these words. As valuable as we are to him as individuals, he was also concerned about the whole world. He was teaching us to pray, “your kingdom come” — to my world.

God is the rightful ruler of our world. He designed it. He created it. He owns it. Even though our world has been claimed and occupied by those who reject God and deny his claim, it is still his.

While visiting the East Coast, a friend of mine had his van stolen. It was gone for quite some time while the thieves drove it around, abused it and acted as if they owned it. It was eventually recognized by the police and recovered. My friend went to the police station and reclaimed what was rightly his while the thieves faced the punishment that was rightly theirs.

We sometimes sing a hymn entitled “This Is My Father’s World”. One of the lines says, “though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.” This is God’s world! When we pray, “thy kingdom come” we are asking God to take his world back again. And he will! When God reclaims his world, he will begin a righteous reign where his will is “done on earth as it is in heaven.” There will be no more child abuse. Illicit drugs will be outlawed and God will enforce the ban. Evildoers will be justly punished. Wars will be no more. Violence against others will disappear. Famine will be replaced with plenty.

God is righteous. That means that he does everything right. So when he takes back our world and institutes his reign, our world will be right. God will rule with a righteous reign. In the meantime, Christians are representatives of God’s kingdom. We are the counter-culture. In some cases, we are the underground.

Truthfully, we have no more likelihood of

reforming this world for righteousness than Boris Yeltsin or the Baltic patriots had of reforming Communism. It was un-reformable. They lived for and worked for and fought for democracy and independence, fully knowing that it would never come until the government was replaced.

Likewise, Christians are not going to turn this country or this world into a perfect place. We're not going to end all suffering or institute permanent peace. What we are called to do is represent our king, to do right even if it doesn't seem to make any difference. We are to pray for God's kingdom to come. We are to represent God's kingdom until it comes. And it will come!

On Jesus' last day on earth he talked about this kingdom coming. His disciples wanted to know when. Let's look at the account from Acts 1:7-11:

"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee", they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

The explanation is clear. The King left, but the King is coming back! Until then, we have the power of the Holy Spirit for kingdom living no matter what country we are in.

Elsewhere in the Bible more details are given. The return of the King can happen at any time. Jesus will be the King of earth. Righteous rule will be established for the first time since the Garden of Eden. Christians will be citizens of that

kingdom and rule together with our King. It will be fantastic!

Last June I reentered the United States after a few days in Ontario, Canada. Because I didn't have my passport with me the US immigration officer asked me some questions, the most important being, "What country are you a citizen of?" My answer convinced him to let me in. I'm sure it was more than just the words. It was the way I talked and looked and everything else.

Imagine someday standing at the border of eternity and God asking you, "What kingdom are you a citizen of?" If you say, "The United States of America" or membership in some church or denomination, you have given the wrong answer. That won't cut it with God. There is

only one answer that is acceptable: "Your kingdom!" Then and only then will you be admitted into God's eternal heaven.

If your answer is any other or your citizenship is anywhere else, I encourage you right now to become a citizen of the kingdom of God. Become a Christian. Give up your present allegiances and swear allegiance to Jesus Christ as Savior and King. Pray and say:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come"

— to me and to my world! Amen.

This is God's world! When we pray, "thy kingdom come" we are asking God to take his world back again. And he will!

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