

**Praying for God's Kingdom to Come
and His Will Be Done in 2010**

Sermon preached by Pastor C. John Steer
Autumn Ridge Church, Rochester, MN
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At Autumn Ridge is our tradition to dedicate the first full week of the New Year to prayer. During this time we commit ourselves and our church to God. I am convinced that many of the blessings we have enjoyed as a fellowship have come about because we have set aside this time to seek the Lord.

This year is no different and so I would ask all of us to pray every day in the coming week that individually we would be filled with the Spirit of God, and corporately our church would be guided by the word of God. On the front cover of Ridgelines you will find some helpful information to assist your intercession.

In particular let us pray for our three bold initiatives. These are:

Bold Initiative One: To support the Compassion Evangelical Hospital in Guinea, West Africa.



Bold Initiative Two: To partner with Next Chapter to build lasting relationships with those who have been impacted by crime, restoring them to God, family and community.



Bold Initiative Three: To use the Elizabeth Lodge to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who love God and serve people.



These are exciting days at Autumn Ridge as we are considering a capital campaign to build the surgical suite at Compassion Evangelical Hospital and to construct The Center here at our church.

On the first weekend of the New Year I usually speak about prayer. On a number of occasions we have looked at the Lord's Prayer. However, today I want to focus on just one part of that remarkable prayer that Jesus taught his disciples.

The phrase I want to consider today is, **"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."** (Matthew 6:10)

I believe that our lives and our church and our community will be spiritually enriched and transformed by **praying for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done in 2010.**

There are three parts to this statement by Jesus and each expands our understanding of what will happen when we pray this way. So let's take them one by one.

First Jesus tells us to plead **YOUR KINGDOM COME**

It was theologian C.H. Dodd who pointed out that the subject closest to Jesus' heart was the kingdom of God.

Jesus spoke more about the kingdom than anything else.

He announced, **"The kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 10:7)**

But what did Jesus mean when he said the kingdom **is near**?

There are two dimensions to this grand concept of the kingdom.

One happens here and now in the present.

The other happens there and then in the future.

First **the kingdom is a present experience.**

It is a present experience of God's grace.

Jesus went around inviting people into his kingdom and the most unlikely people were joining.

Jesus warned that the rich will find it hard to get in.

The respectable will find it difficult and the religious will find it almost impossible.

But anyone who is bad enough and who admits it can join. Anyone who humbles themselves like a child and is willing to start all over again is welcomed into the kingdom.

Jesus said, "This kingdom is like a precious pearl."

It is worth selling all you have to obtain, because it is so valuable.

He explained, "this kingdom is like a mustard seed".

It may be small now but it is growing bigger and bigger.

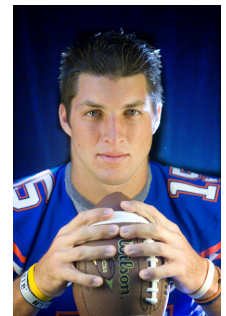
He announced, "This kingdom is like yeast."

It works silently like yeast in a lump of dough but it changes the dough forever.

The kingdom of God is already here and we can join it right now. There are people here today who weren't in the kingdom a year ago.

We enter the kingdom when the power of God comes into our life. The kingdom is where the King reigns so when we pray, "your kingdom come," we are asking that more and more people will experience the reign of God.

We are acknowledging God's right to rule everybody, including us. We are willing to let the details of our days come under his control. Tim Tebow illustrated this in the Sugar Bowl on Saturday. He is not only the best college quarterback of all times but a committed Christian who expresses his faith in texts on his eyeblick. Tebow loves playing football but he knows that playing for God is far more important. He spends his summers doing missions and has raised \$300,000 for an orphanage started by his father in the Philippines.



So when we pray "your kingdom come" we are asking that people might enter the kingdom of grace now as a present experience.

Second, **the kingdom is a future expectation.**

There is not only a kingdom of grace now but there is a kingdom of glory to come.

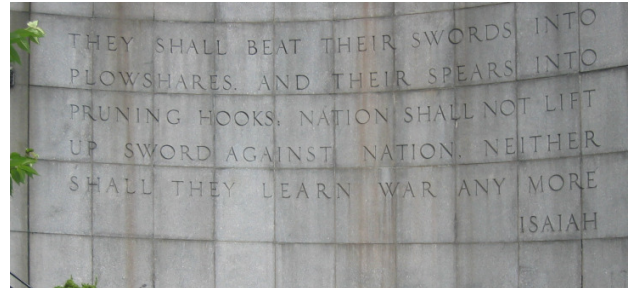
For the kingdom will come when the king comes.

At the moment the king has come spiritually so we have a spiritual kingdom but one day he will come physically and establish a physical kingdom.

He will then reign over the new heaven and the new earth.

Jesus will be the last king of history.

When that happens, the text on the Isaiah wall of the United Nations Building in New York will finally be true.



It reads, **"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and neither shall they learn war anymore."**

Until that time comes the kingdom of God will be opposed by the kingdom of Satan. For the two kingdoms exist side by side.

Jesus made it clear that the wheat and the weeds will grow together until the coming of the king.

The sheep and the goats will graze together.

The good and bad fish will swim together.

But when the king comes there will be a sorting out.

The bad will be discarded.

The good will be kept.

Evil will be banished and Christ will reign.

The Bible speaks of the time when Jesus takes all the kingdoms of the worlds and hands them over to his Father.

This will be the climax of history and God's program will be complete.

So this is not a prayer we can pray with folded arms.

This is a prayer that calls us to action.

It requires **confession**.

For Jesus says, **"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 3:1)**

It requires **consistency**.

For Jesus says, **"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62)**

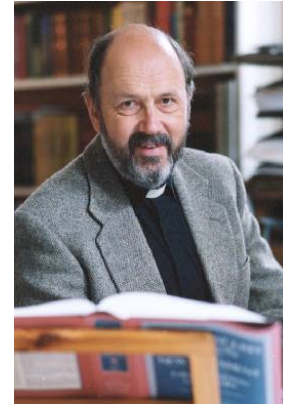
It requires **commitment**.

Jesus says, **"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33)**

Praying "your kingdom come" will have a profound effect on our life. But it would be wrong to think that its impact is restricted to something that is private and personal for Jesus intends that his kingdom will transform the whole earth.

It is "your kingdom come ... on earth."

I love what N.T. Wright says about this petition.
 "This is a prayer for the kingdom of God to become fully present, not for God's people to be snatched away from earth to heaven, but for the glory and beauty of heaven to be turned into earthly reality as well. When that is done, God's name, his character, his reputation and his very presence will be held in high honor everywhere."



Let's think about what that means for Autumn Ridge.
 We want the kingdom to be seen in us.
 That means we want to introduce people to Jesus.
 We want boys and girls and singles and couples and families and seniors to be transformed by God's grace.

But praying "your kingdom come" also means we want to be an influence for God in our community.
 We want to show the benefits of applying biblical principles to our schools, workplaces and government.
 The reason is that these principles are enduring.
 They are true. They come from God himself and when we live by them our society is better off.

But we don't want to limit our influence to Rochester.
 Modern communications means the world has shrunk.
 We can reach almost any place on the planet in 48 hours.
 Although there are needy people here in our community the need is even greater in other places.
 That is why we are building a hospital in Guinea West Africa.
 Children die there every day who would live if they were here in Rochester.
 We can make a profound difference in that poor country.
 We can save lives in a place with inadequate medical care.
 We can proclaim truth in a place with few churches.

Have you wondered why America is such an affluent country?
 Is it just a matter of luck that we have prospered while other countries are poor?
 200 years ago much of our country was uninhabited and we were as poor as other nations.

But something extraordinary happened in the past 200 years.
 America became prosperous because of certain values which created certain institutions, which encouraged entrepreneurship which resulted in shared prosperity.
 The most important value was freedom and it was based on the biblical idea of liberty.

Guinea is in the state it is because it has little concept of freedom. Since independence from France in 1958 it has been ruled by dictators who have been incredibly evil and corrupt.

Because Guinea lacks godly values it doesn't have the infrastructure that encourages entrepreneurship. It has enormous natural resources which have not been properly exploited.

The solution for Guinea is first the gospel which will give the right values which will result in the right structures which will result in a rising tide of prosperity for every person.

That prosperity will mean things like universal education, clean water, improved sanitation, better health care and greater supplies of food.

That is what it means to pray "thy kingdom come" for Guinea.

It is to want God's best for that land that without him is spiritually and economically poor.

Now this won't be easy.

There will be many setbacks and disappointments.

Already Beth Beacom, our first medical missionary to Guinea has had to cancel her plans because of the violence there.

We may well discover that medical supplies we send will be stolen. The government may make it hard to run the hospital as we want to. But just because it is difficult doesn't mean we give up. We pray "your kingdom come" and recognize this is a long term goal.

The second part of this incredible petition is **YOUR WILL BE DONE.**

Praying "your will be done" is a request for courage.

It is asking that we will be able to take a stand for God.

That we be able to say, "I resolve to do God's will in this situation whatever the cost to me."

Now if we really want to do God's will in 2010 we need to start with **the desire to discover God's will.**

How can we discover God's will?

I have found that there are four ways to find God's will and everyone who comes to see me to talk about the will of God gets the same Bible study.

The first way we discover God's will is by looking at **the principles of God's word.**

The second is **the prompting of God's Spirit.**

The third is **the providence of God's dealings.**

Maybe we are still not sure.

A wonderful way to confirm guidance from these sources is **the people of God's church.**

Go to a mature Christian you respect.

Ask them to pray and seek guidance for you.

Some of us think we have an infallible satellite link to heaven and so never need to consult other people.

But we are part of a community of believers.

If God is revealing something to us he will also reveal it to other Christians for he is a God of unity.

Perhaps we think God is calling us to a certain task.

How do we know?

We feel it is the right thing but have we asked other believers?

If we do we might find that they see our gifts lying in another direction completely. If our guidance is really from God then it will stand the test of being shared with God's people.

Are you considering a new ministry, marriage or a move in 2010?

Then go to a group of mature Christians and ask them to pray and tell you what guidance they receive.

This is the way Paul and Barnabas were called.

The Holy Spirit didn't just tell them.

He told the entire leadership of the church at Antioch.

So when we pray "your will be done" we need to discover God's will and then test that discovery.

The devil wants us to make up our minds in a hurry without telling anyone else about it so that we can't test it.

But the call of God can be tested by time and advice.

Then if we are serious about praying "Your will be done" it will require **the duty to do God's will.**

Jesus told a parable that illustrates the connection between discovering God's will and doing it.

He said a man had two sons. He went to the first and said

"Son go work today in my vineyard."

The son said "I will" but he then didn't go.

So the Father went to his second son and made the same request. The son answered, 'I will not go.'

But afterwards he regretted it and went to the vineyard.

Jesus then asked which of the two sons did the will of the father? They both had discovered the will of the father but which one did their duty?

The answer is the second son.

The point is it is not what we say to God in moments of enthusiasm or frustration that matters, it is what we do for him over the long haul.

Duty is about ninety percent of the success of the Christian life. Solomon tells us, **"Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)**

Not only do we do our duty, we love to do it, even if it is inconvenient and difficult, because we are doing it for the King of kings. So we can say with the Psalmist **"I delight in your commands because I love them." (Psalm 119:47)**

It is helpful here for us to understand that there are two Greek words which are translated by our one English word "will".

In the New Testament the first meaning of God's will is his **decrees**. These will happen. Nothing can stop them.

Paul is using the word "will" in this sense when he talks to the Ephesian elders and says, **"I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will (counsel) of God." (Acts 20:27)**

But there is a second word for God's will, which means his **wishes** or **desires**. This is the word that is used in the Lord's Prayer. When we pray "your will be done" we are saying "God, may your wishes and desires be done." These are actions that will not take place without our cooperation.

Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is a good example of this second meaning. For there he uses the word "desire" not decree. He says to his Father "your desire (wish) be done."

Jesus is not being forced to go to the cross. He can refuse. It is the Father's desire that he should die. Jesus ponders this against his own desire to live and concludes, "Nevertheless not my desire but your desire be done."

So at the beginning of a new year using this prayer which Jesus has taught us we say "your kingdom come. Your will be done." Then there is this third phrase that expands and explains the first two.

On earth as it is in heaven.

We long that God's will, will be done on earth right now in the same way as it is being done in heaven. Think of how the angels are doing God's will in heaven at this moment. They do it **willingly, continually, completely and quickly.**

That is the model for us. Charles Wesley brought that enthusiasm to do God's will in heaven down to earth when he wrote,

"Inflame our hearts with perfect love
In us the work of faith fulfill.
So not heaven's host shall swifter move
Than we on earth to do your will."

People who pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is heaven" will live and think differently. They are the sort of people described by the Zimbabwe covenant which declares what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The Zimbabwe Covenant goes like this:

I am part of the fellowship of the unashamed.
I have Holy Spirit power.
The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line.
The decision has been made. I am a disciple of his.
I will not look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense,

my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking,
small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions,
worldly talking, cheap giving and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, possession, promotion, or popularity. I do not have
to be right, first, tops, recognized, regarded or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on his
presence, walk by patience, I am uplifted by prayer and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven. My road is narrow, my way is rough, my
guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed. I will
not give up, shut up, or let go.

I will go until He comes and work until He stops me.

I am a disciple of Jesus.