

Matthew 6 v 5 -- 15

**The Lord's prayer 3 "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done"
To understand the benefits and importance of praying "thy will be done" rather than "my will be done"**

Joke on prayer (Bucket of Surprises p 157)

A woman was at work when she received a phone call telling her that her daughter was ill. She left work and went to the pharmacist to buy some flu medicine. Unfortunately, having done so, she returns to discover she'd locked her keys in the car.

- She looked around for a rusty coathanger, found one, but didn't know how to use it. So she bowed her head and prayed for help. Within seconds a scruffy man appeared. She was so desperate she told him her plight and asked him "do you know how to break into a car with one of these?"

"Sure" said the man, and within a minute had opened the car door

The woman hugged him and thanked him profusely.

"Thank you so much" she said "you're a very nice man".

The lady replied "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was imprisoned for car theft and have only been out for one hour."

"Thank you, Lord" shouted the woman "for sending me a professional!"

We're looking this morning at something which nearly everyone – whether they come to church or not – say they do from time to time . . . and that is pray. And we pray for all sorts of things:

"I hope this job interview goes all right"

"Help me find a parking space"

"Please help me get better"

. . . are things we've all prayed

Someone once said about exams "as long as there are *tests*, there will be *prayer* in schools" – it's true isn't it!

- But how do we go about it? Praying might feel such a natural reflex . . . do we need to be told *how* to do it?

Well, Jesus' disciples thought so . . . it may well have been because they knew in Jesus such a natural *peace*, such a clear *direction* about what he needed to do with his life, such an *openness* to others . . . that they sensed so much had come from his heavenly father that would have been built on how he prayed. And so they ask *him* "how do you pray?"

. . . and he gives them the Lord's prayer it's a prayer in *stages* – not that we have to say those particular words, but to think about the stages it takes you through.

And Jesus suggests we should start with “Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name”

-- we spend a bit of time first of all reminding ourselves *who* were praying to

-- we remind ourselves of the relationship we can have with God "our father"

-- we then remind ourselves what God is like -- if his “name” captures all the characteristics of God then maybe we spent a little time reminding ourselves of *who* God is -- that he is creator, saviour, he is holy, shepherd -- that he is our heavenly father

It's not so much that the Lord's prayer is a clever formula of magical words that we just need to rush out Jesus is saying it's more like a step-by-step guide to praying. And the first step is to come before God and realise who he is (that's what we've been doing so far)

And then we pray *this* (and this is what we're looking at this morning) we pray that “Thy Kingdom come” -- for a while we're putting our own concerns aside and thinking about *God's* will.

You see, *God's kingdom* is a good thing! you see people's lives being changed as they start to allow God to be their king you see differences in behaviour as people grow in love and peace in patience and kindness and goodness and self control as the holy spirit grows in their lives also, things that are wrong with our world as it is, are taken on by people who live in God's kingdom

-- as the poor are helped and cared for

-- as injustices are challenged

-- as corruption and self-centredness are taken on

God's kingdom is a good thing - obviously there are many areas where the Kingdom of God is not yet visible but our prayer is that this kingdom might *grow*.

*Sharon spoke a couple of weeks ago really helpfully about praying -- and she compared it is to tuning an instrument like a guitar.

. . . You see you can tune the guitar “to itself”, she said, but it is only really “in tune” when it is tuned to *other* instruments only then can you really make music.

- And I think Sharon was saying when we come before God and spend a bit of time praying that *his* kingdom will grow in this world than we are really getting in tune with *God* and *his* concerns.

Now, a very valid part of our prayer is coming to God with our own concerns and worries -- the Bible reminds us "*cast your cares on him, for he cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7) but so often it's all that we *ever* end up doing with prayer!

- It's not that that's a bad thing to do, it's just that it can be the same every time and can get a bit monotonous.
- Jesus is saying when we pray we can make things much more varied and interesting

Thinking about how you pray is a bit like thinking about what you eat:

If you want to live as a healthy person you need a *variety* in your diet -- for instance to have the energy we need we need carbohydrates (bread, pasta etc--etc) but if that's all we ever end up eating we can go stodgy and overweight and our lives can lack that vitality.

* I remember as a student we had a chip shop down the road and so we'd have a bag of chips every evening – nice for a while, but take it from me – it doesn't do you much good! To stay healthy I needed all the *different* things that food gives -- to eat protein, fibre and vitamins for example (foreign words to some students!) – but when I did, I felt better!

And it's just the same with prayer -- if all that prayer is to you is “asking God for things” -- then although that's an entirely good thing to do Jesus is encouraging you to vary your diet to try new things to add *vitality* . . and *freshness* to your life to invite God in prayer to play a bigger part in your life

To learn to start praying not "my will be done" but instead "thy will be done" and when we start putting his will at the centre of our lives we start to grow healthy.

. . . . So if in your spiritual lives you're feeling stodgy, or listless, or lacking energy or things don't feel as fresh as they once were it may well be that “you're not dieting properly!” -- that what you're actually having is one type of food only . . .or one type of prayer only.

What Jesus is inviting you to do is a different way of praying to come to God and to ask to be drawn in to a much bigger picture than simply your lives alone
-- to see how God is weaving the thread of your life together with many other peoples to do *His* work
-- when we pray "Thy Kingdom come" we are asking that *our* lives may become part of it
-- that our love, that our patience, that sharing our faith, that our generosity in giving -- that all these things and more -- may be used by God to build his kingdom.

So rather than getting what we want, prayer is more about *placing ourselves into God's hands*

I saw another example of doing something "in tune" on the TV the other day

*I don't know if anyone's been watching "the choir" in this programme the singer and conductor Gareth Malone was trying to get together a bunch of people who didn't sing to sing a complicated piece in St Albans Cathedral.

- And in six weeks he'd got them from doing no singing at all to being ready to perform together at the cathedral
- what struck me was what he said to them in his final briefing before they were to go on stage
-- he said "look, you've done the practice now when you're singing it for real I want you all to look at me and I will bring you in at the right time."

"Look at me" and I think when it comes to prayer God is saying to us "look at me - trust in me and my love for you and my strength and my power and my direction for your life -- if you want my kingdom to come and my will to be done you will be singing in tune".

Although it sounds simple, this phrase "Thy Kingdom come thy will be done" searches the reality of our hearts and what we really want -- is it for God's kingdom to grow, or simply for your own kingdom to grow?

If I've ever learnt anything over the years in my Christian life, to be honest it is gradually learning that it's better to put God in charge of my life than me in charge of my life -- he knows better what I need - he's my heavenly *father*. He wants the best for us -- as the apostle Paul was to put it "that we might know God's will -- his good pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12 v2)

-- his will is good, pleasing and perfect but would you trust it? Will you pray Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done?

Here are one or two practical suggestions:

1) If we're honest, it can be quite difficult at times to pray "thy will be done" instead of "my will be done" and as we grow in our faith we may well discover that the Holy Spirit gently challenges us in some areas.It can be very hard to trust in God's way, especially all in one go. It may be better and more realistic to come to God and to say that there are areas in your life where you struggle in giving God his way and maybe the best prayer to pray is "Lord I don't always want your will to be done (over my own) but I pray that you would change my heart *that I would want more of your will*". That's a good place to start.

2) As I've said, to pray for our own concerns is entirely valid but for a healthy diet we need to learn to pray for *other things* as well.

-- for instance it's good to pray for things in this church – even ministries that you're not directly involved in. Sometimes when I think about praying for this church there is so much that I could be praying and I don't know where to start -- and so I find this prayer card may help
-- introduce prayer card:

- day by day

- may not know area, find out, ask "what can I be praying for?"

-- and for each one of these ministries we pray that:

God's Kingdom will come:

- that *His* will for those things will be accomplished

- that *His* love will be more shown

- that friendships may be built up, new contacts are made, that people are encouraged and helped in their lives

(some of these cards on the table by the door, why not take one and find a place for it in a bible, on the kitchen noticeboard – and use it!

What I think Jesus is saying is that praying is less about "getting what we want" and more about starting on an adventure – yes, placing *our own concerns* at his feet – but also putting *ourselves* at His disposal "thy will be done" – that is an adventure indeed. That's how Jesus says we should pray – will you follow him?