

“Thy Kingdom Come”
National Ministries Conference 2025
“Your Kingdom Come”
Matthew 6:5-15
Dr. Sandy Willson

Thank you very much, and it is always a pleasure to be here with you. And, especially on national missions Sunday and I just want to say to Doctor Redd and to his wife, Jen, not just on behalf of this great congregation and all of his officers and staff, but all of us who love Briarwood Presbyterian Church -- Thank you for answering God's call to come. We are so, so grateful. I'm excited for you. And yes, indeed, whenever you go through transitions like the one you've been through, you especially appreciate those times of refreshment. When God gives you your permanent leader, at least for a while. Until, either the Lord returns or some of us go up and see him. But it's great to be here with you and to be studying this great theme. YOUR KINGDOM COME. We're going to see how important that is tonight, as well as tomorrow night and this morning. This morning we're going to look at what it means, what the kingdom is all about, and what it means to pray for the kingdom to come.

Tonight, we're going to look at what we do when the kingdoms conflict. And they do, and it presents massive problems for us as Christians. We're going to talk about how to manage that tonight. Tomorrow night we get to look at how this whole thing turns out. You know, whenever you get engaged in something, you want to know what the prospects are for success. So we'll look at that tomorrow night. And of course, meanwhile, in each of these evening sessions, we get to mix and mingle with, your national missionaries and agencies, which is so important, as we shall see, even as we discuss the topic.

Well, now we're in Matthew chapter six. While you're standing, we're going to read the Word of God, and we're reading the section on prayer in the sermon on the Mount. And particularly we're going to be looking at the first part of verse ten. Don't you love it when the preacher only has three words? He's preaching from your kingdom come. Surely the sermon can't be too long when he's only preaching on three words, but we want to look at the context of these words. So would you please turn with me to Matthew six, verse five, reading through verse 15, hear the word of God.

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door, and pray

to your father who is in secret, and your father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then, like this. Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.

All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like the flower of the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. But the word of our God stands forever.

Amen. Please be seated.

It's very important that we have an emphasis each year on ministering to our city, to our state, to our nation, as well as is Brightwood, as well known for concentrating on ministering to the world, which you do so effectively. The reason it's important is that when Jesus gave us his instructions before he ascended into heaven, he said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

And when you receive that spirit, he will make you witnesses. You will be witnesses, first of all, in Jerusalem, our city, and then in Judea, our local region, and then Samaria, even cross-culturally, and then to the ends of the earth. So the mission of the church has always work from the inside out. We start with those closest to us.

We work with our neighbors, we work with our region, and it ends up that we work with a whole world. Briarwood has been expert at this for many, many years, and it's a privilege to be among you this weekend to talk about why we do this. And we need to look at why we do this, because this work is difficult. We know it's very needed. In Memphis, for example, we know that 40% of five year olds and under who live in our city limits live below the poverty line. 40%. We know that a massive amount of our kids, by the time they're in the third grade, they're not reading at third grade level. And when you can't read, your economic destiny is often laid out for you. And these are urgent matters in our city. And then we have, just like you do, two thirds of the population historically, who are not connected to a local church, which means at least two thirds of the people in our city don't know the Lord. And you have the same thing in Birmingham, I'm quite sure, as a matter of fact, what we've seen happen over the past 25 years is a massive exodus from the church.

We've lost 40 million people from the US church in the past 25 years. And in case you think that's just liberals and Catholics, it's not a lot of those people. About 30% of them consider

themselves evangelical Protestants. And you know as well as I do from looking at the the way history works out, that when people separate themselves from the community of the church, they eventually lose interest in the Lord himself and his mission.

We're in we're in dire times. The needs are great in our city. If you take the men between the age of 18 and 35, we have more men in prison than we do in higher education. And our unemployment rate among African-Americans in the city from 18 to 35 is about 30%. What the men do when they're unemployed, well, all you need to do is read your newspaper.

That's what they do. We have a massive task ahead of us. Meanwhile, if you're like me, I mean, this guy just said that I've got five children, five in-law children and 14 grandchildren. We got loads to worry about. Must you pray about lots of problems to engage a lot of concerns in our family. And you have them too.

Your own personal life, your family life. You've got enough on your plate. Why should I be taking good resources where I know that can be used well in my own family? And I'm I'm live and give them away like you do over \$1 million every year, to your local ministry. And even yesterday, in the morning, you had almost 300 people visiting various ministries and helping them out.

Why give all this energy in this time? Well, there's a reason for it. And you see it when Jesus tells us what we're to be praying for and what we're to be praying for is what we're to be living for, what we're to be urgent about, what we really care about. Now, there are six petitions in the Lord's Prayer.

We're looking at the second one, but all of them glorify God. God is the center of attention here. It's all for his glory. Which brings us to that second petition, which is simply this your kingdom come. That prayer is enormously important because that's not what we do by human nature, by human nature. We're concerned with one kingdom, and that is our kingdom.

And we've been well trained to do that, because in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve decided to listen to the voice of the evil one instead of the voice of their father in heaven, and they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they not only fell morally and spiritually, became corrupt, they sold themselves into slavery.

They adopted another dominion, another kingdom with another king. His name is Satan. And the Bible in the New Testament teaches us that he's the ruler of the power of the air. In one sense, he's the ruler of the kingdoms that we know now in our world. And we gave ourselves to him so that by nature, every human being that is born into this world is interested in himself or herself, because we gave ourselves to the wrong king in the first place.

So what Jesus teaches us when we pray, we're to pray the same way we're to live. We're to live with the interest of God's kingdom. Now, I want us to look at these three words in three ways.

Those three words are going to outline our discussion this morning. Your kingdom come. When we come to that first word, your here's what we're going to observe.

We have a king. Our God is a king. So we have a king. The second word is kingdom, your kingdom. That means we're going to observe. The second point I want to make this morning is that our king has established a kingdom, and we'll look at the very nature of that kingdom. What is it we're praying for, then?

Thirdly is the verb. We want that kingdom to come. What does that mean for that kingdom to come in our midst? And we're going to look at some elements of what that means when we pray this prayer, and what it means for our lives when we not only pray for the kingdom to come, but we're living for the kingdom to come.

Reverend Eric Alexander, the late, preacher from Scotland, said about the Lord's Prayer, it's not only a pattern for praying, it's a pattern for living. So we're going to see that as we even discuss what it means to pray that prayer. It means to be engaged in the very thing that we're pleading the Lord to do. Now, let's look, first of all, then, the fact that we have a king, it's God.

And what he has done is to send his son to challenge and to recoup the kingdom that was given over to Satan when the incarnation took place. You'll notice, even at the Annunciation, that the angel tells Mary, there will be one who's the son of David in his kingdom will last forever and ever. So this Davidic dynasty is coming now into play with the eternal King that's going to rule you. Find it. When Jesus first begins to preach, what does he preach about the kingdom? That he's the King and that is coming and everybody needs to repent. Ladies and gentlemen, we have a king now in the Old Testament, we don't have the phrase Kingdom of God. This New Testament. We'll come to that in a moment. But in the Old Testament it's really clear that God is the king of all the universe.

Take your Bibles, for example, and turn to chapter 47 while leaving your finger in Matthew six, and you'll see how the psalmist puts it in Psalm 47 he says, clap your hands, oh peoples, shout to God with loud songs of joy. And here's why. For the Lord the Most High is to be feared a great king over all the earth.

Keep reading. Verse six sing praises to God. Sing praises, sing praises to our King. Sing praises for God is the King of all the earth. Verse eight God reigns over the nations. So in this sense, what the psalmist is saying is that God rules. Even now, with Satan ruling over the hearts of human beings as they're conceived and brought into this world, the Lord still sovereignly rules over the entire universe.

Every blade of grass, every thought of every king and prince, every motion in every region of the world. The Lord is sovereign over. He ordains whatsoever comes to pass, and that since he is the

King. However, there's another sense in which he is to be the king, and that is that he is redemptive. Change in the hearts of people so that they willingly come under his rule and reign.

That's his redemptive kingship. So you have his providential kingship. By providence he rules and governs all the universe. By redemption. He is ruling over his people, whose hearts are changed. So you have this kingdom in two sense in the Old Testament. Generally speaking, we're looking at the sovereign rule over all the planet and over all the cosmos. When we come to the New Testament, we're particularly looking at this redemptive kingdom that he brings.

Now, if God is King, we are his subjects, and in many ways that defines our relationship to God. King and subjects. That means that we lift him up and exalt him. We speak well of him. We praise him. It also means we bow down to him and follow his orders, his directions, his decrees from his throne. Oh, not too long ago, I was speaking with an English friend, an English woman, and I told her how much I admired her Queen.

Queen Elizabeth. I was kind of a fan of Queen Elizabeth. I really liked her, and I know she wasn't perfect, but I liked her. And I said to my friend, you know, she she appears to be. Maybe she's a Christian. And my friend said, piers, she is definitely a Christian. She has her devotions, you know, out of the prayer book every morning, listen to her Christmas messages.

She's absolutely. Well, you know, excuse me. Sorry that I cast in shadow of a doubt upon the regenerate nature of the Queen of England. This was a good example of a subject who had great affection for Her Majesty and wanted to lift her up, was defensive of her, and obviously in subjection to her. Well, I walked away from that, admiring not only Queen Elizabeth, but one of her subjects.

I was defending her, but I also walked away thinking, do I speak of my king? I have a king. Do I speak of in this way? Do I immediately come to not only his defense, but his offense? Do I speak of the of His Majesty and of his royal presence and of his moral character, and how much I admire him?

That's what it means to be a loyal subject. There's deep affection and respect for and a desire to lift up. We have a king. Well, one of my seminary professors. Some of you will know the name doctor Roger Nicole. Roger was French speaking Swiss. But he had a special affection for the French Huguenots. Who were the the old French Calvinists.

Roger being a Calvinist himself, a French speaking Calvinist. And he would tell us stories about the Huguenots. One of the stories he told. I don't know if it's a powerful, but I think it has some roots in history. He tells about the time when the Huguenots in 1627, they kind of dominated a very active commercial port called La Rochelle in France.

And when King Louis the 13th came into power, he really wanted to eliminate Protestantism and Protestants in general. And he besieged La Rochelle. The Cardinal Richelieu, who was the servant of the king. Roman Catholic kingship, was helping the king with the siege. And it was a very severe siege, stopping all food, entry, all supplies. This little city of 40,000 people eventually got work down to 5000 people.

Children were dying right and left. They were eating rats and shoe leather to have any food to eat at all. And the diseases were terrible. Well, at some point, Richelieu sends over a message to the Huguenots in the name of the king, surrender. And Dr King Cole said the Huguenots sent another message back in Latin it was Regnum Habemus.

We have a king.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is how we react to the kingdoms of this world around us, and all the temptations to vary our lives, our speech, our thought forms, our lifestyles, everything when we're being tempted, whom we're surrounded, when we're besieged by a wave of people who don't agree with us in our hearts, we're saying, I have a king.

I happen to like my king. I happen to love my king. And I'm willing to die for my king. Now that's what it means to have the your in the kingdom. It's no longer your kingdom. It's his kingdom. We don't pray. Lord, grant me my kingdom now. Your kingdom, Lord. It's his. And we abandon the most natural thing in the world to do, which is to build our own kingdom.

You say, well, you know, I'm not a wealthy person. I don't have a big kingdom. I know you've got a little kingdom. I know exactly how we think because I have my own little kingdom. I'm looking at my bank statement. I'm looking at my finances. I'm looking at my lifestyle. The house I live in, the cars I drive, my little kingdom.

That's what I spend most of my time thinking about. Unfortunately, I suppose some of you would say the same thing. What happens when you start praying is the Lord teaches us to pray is that you convert from having your primary concern, being your kingdom to being his kingdom. Doctor Francis Schaefer used to say, there are three types of people those who build their own kingdom, those who build the kingdom of God, and those through whom God builds his kingdom.

We become that third type of person when we learn to pray, we are dependent upon him that even we might advance his kingdom. We can't do that in our own strength. Our king is the greatest king of all. Unlike Queen Elizabeth, he actually died for you. Or at least we can say the King. In this sense, the father sent his son to die for you.

He sent his spirit to raise you from the dead morally and spiritually. And one day that same spirit will raise you out of the grave. This is our King. Of course we have affection for him, and of

course we would abandon our own kingdoms as our first priority and make him first priority. Now, secondly, let's talk about the fact that this king that we have has established a kingdom.

Now, there are several things that can be said about the kingdom, because in the New Testament, you have this reference to the kingdom of God over 100 times. It is the most frequent way in which Jesus speaks of his work. Repent and believe. The kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God is at hand. And when we're told about his ministry in chapter four, verse 23, we're told that he went about proclaiming the kingdom.

So it was all about the kingdom. And sometimes we don't frame up the Christian life that way. But the Bible does. And there are many things said about the Kingdom. I just want to mention a few of them that I think are relevant for us this morning. Could I mention 3 or 4 things? Number one, the kingdom is a spiritual reality rather at this point than a physical reality.

Now, when Jesus comes back, the spiritual and the physical will be reunited. So we will be able to say at that point that the kingdom is physically recognizable. Now words will return to a theocracy and the return of Christ. But for now, it's spiritual, and it does not have spatial limits or geopolitical boundaries. Now, in the Old Testament, it did.

If Israel was prospering the nation, Israel was prospering spiritually. The Kingdom of God was prospering spiritually. That would be a case of what we would call spiritual nationalism. And the reason is Israel was a theocracy. Now, since, the coming of Christ, there have been certain empires that have behaved as though they were the new Israel. For example, the British Empire, in the old days, the 19th century.

I'm sure Queen Victoria would have thought that the advancement of the British Empire is essential for the advancement of the gospel, and therefore they had all the theological justification they wanted to rule in India and Rhodesia, many other places in the world, and to expand the British Empire, because when the British Empire prospers, the church is prospering. The Kingdom of God is prospering.

We would say as Americans especially, we think they were mistaken on their theology. However, there are some American Christians who get kind of confused ourselves, and we think that the advance of the kingdom is dependent upon the spiritual flourishing of our nation. It's called Christian nationalism. And that's a mistake, because what Jesus teaches us clearly is that the wheat and the tares are all mixed together, and you can't pull up the wheat, are you?

Rather, you can't pull up the tares because you'll destroy the wheat? So it's mysterious and it's secret. And the non kingdom subject, the one who does not submit to the king, can't figure it out. It's a secret. It's mystical, it's mysterious. Now some would be discouraged and say what's happened to the kingdom? I don't see it anywhere. Jesus addressed that to.

He said, do you know this little mustard seed? You can barely see it. It's the smallest seed we know about. But if you plant that thing, it turns into a big bush that gives many, many birds rest and refreshment, he said. That's what the kingdom is like. So ladies and gentlemen, don't get too discouraged with what you see in the United States of America.

Those of you who travel the world for the Christian mission and are connected with our missionaries in different places, God is at work powerfully in many parts of the world. We would love for him to be at work here very powerfully, but he is not giving up on this world. He has come to reclaim this world and he's in the business of doing so.

It is a spiritual kingdom. Secondly, this kingdom is impossible for you to join without a miraculous work being done on your behalf. So Jesus said, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, but you can't do it on your own. It's impossible. Classic case rich young ruler, upstanding young man. President of the synagogue, recognized broadly as a distinguished person in the community who gives liberally to other people.

Very generous. And he comes up to Jesus and said, what must I do to have eternal life? And Jesus reminds him of all the commandments. And he says, well, I've done those since my youth, which means he didn't understand the law in the first place, because it's a matter of the heart. And Jesus said to more, just got one more thing.

Why don't you sell everything you have, give to the poor and then come follow me?

The man hung his head and walked away. He couldn't do it. The disciples were stunned. Jesus, do you know who just turned down the most distinguished person in our entire community? What's going to happen to the reputation of our little band when you do things like that? And Jesus said, it's impossible for anyone to enter the kingdom. It's more likely that a camel can make its way through the eye of a needle than a rich person can enter the kingdom. It's impossible. But here's the good news all things are possible with God. Yes, they are with God. And here's what he does. He not only sends His son to die for you, he sends his spirit to regenerate. You because he's making you citizens of the kingdom, so that you now miraculously want to lay your kingdom aside and come into his kingdom.

It's called the new birth. John chapter three Jesus teaches Nicodemus. There's no way you can even see the kingdom, much less enter it. Apart from being born again, born from on high. So we're birthed out of heaven spiritually. This is a kingdom work. This is all his kingdom work. This is his plan to take over the planet, to get it back from the one that we gave it to in the Garden of Eden.

Is it not marvelous what he's doing? So you see that the kingdom is spiritual. You see, they can only be entered by a sovereign work of God's grace. Which leads me to the third point. This kingdom, ladies and gentlemen, is infinitely gracious. Let me tell you why I say this. If you will

look at any regime changes around the world when you get a new king, especially from a new family line, the old family is executed because, you know, the only reason that Mephibosheth survived is that David and Jonathan had a deal, and David promised Jonathan he wouldn't destroy all of Jonathan's family because that was normal behavior.

David, coming in from a different line. He's from the tribe of Judah. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin. He's going to wipe out all those Benjamin knights who think they have some right to the throne. That's what happens when you have a regime change. Furthermore, when the king who takes over thinks that you are rebellious against his rulership, he is going to wipe you out.

It always happens. I mean, look at Putin in Russia. Look at what, is happening in Gaza this week. They're just executing people who don't agree with Hamas, that that's typical behavior historically. Now, let's talk about your King and let's talk about you. Your king is just and holy and righteous. There's not one flaw in him at all.

And his demand for you, if you're going to be in his kingdom, is that you'd be perfect. So how are you doing so far? Not too well, are you? What hope is there for me? I'm a rebel and he is the sovereign King. I'm toast. Now, wait just a minute. This king is different from every other king. He's a redemptive king and he sends his son to pay the price.

The prince pays your price that you own. And then he grants total amnesty to anyone who desires it. So you have citizenship. Not only that, you're not only a citizen of the kingdom, he adopts you in his own family. Now you're royalty. This is the kind of king we have. And this is the kingdom. It's very, very gracious.

We have to move on. Thirdly, what does it mean then, to pray your kingdom come? Let me mention several things. Number one, it means that you and I come under the sway of his kingdom. It means that you and I first pray that his kingdom take up residence in my heart, that his kingdom capture my imagination, that his kingdom take over my energies and my ambitions, that I give myself away for the advancement of his Kingdom and for the personal relationship that he's offering me as the key to his subject.

That becomes everything to me. It all starts there. Ladies and gentlemen, I don't think you can really go any further in this kingdom. Prayer until it starts with you. Secondly, we're praying for his Kingdom to come in our church. That means if there's racial justice anywhere is to be found here. If there's concern for the vulnerable, the poor, and the unborn anywhere is to shine the brightest here.

If there's ever a place where a lonely person knows that they can have friends, it's here. If there's ever a place that has a mindset of God's ethic ruling everything in all of life, it's here. It's the church. And when we pray, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It begins with the church.

The church is the headquarters for the Kingdom. The kingdom is mysterious. It's wherever people are willingly subjecting themselves to his redemptive reign. You can't overly institutionalize it. But you can say this about the institution, its headquarters and headquarters has to be following him. So we're praying when we pray this. And that means, of course, that if you, a Christian, if you've given your heart to the King, you by necessity give your heart to his church.

There's no such thing as an isolated Christian. Not consistently anyway. Thirdly, when we pray, your kingdom come, we're praying that others may come into it.

We're praying for our neighbors. I think about all these national missionaries that you support, some of whom were here today, and the work that they do, some of them working with parents. Mothers who are pregnant don't have a husband, some of them dealing with people who don't know how to read and write. And they're 20 years old.

Some of them are dealing with people who are just abjectly in poverty. Some of them are dealing with people who are in jail or in prisons. Some of them are dealing with university campus students or high school students. All of these are that the kingdom may shine through the church, and people may be drawn to know the king and find him saving way through the gospel.

How do they find it? Through the proclamation of the Kingdom. It's the proclamation of Jesus Christ and His Lordship and his magnificent and gracious reign that he offers reconciliation to rebels. It's a marvelous message that changes lives, as we've already heard today. Fourthly, when we pray, your kingdom come, we're asking the Lord, as we saw in the Shorter Catechism, to destroy the works of Satan and replace it with works of righteousness, so that everywhere I look I'm thinking from the Kingdom perspective, and I'm thinking on behalf of the King, and I take up his interest as my own interests.

And of course, that means I'm going to be burdened and grieved all my life. And I accept that. Because that's what my Savior did. He was grieved not just on Holy Week, all three years of his public ministry. He was a grief and a sorrow and a burden to him. And when you come to him, you walk in his steps and you take up the burdens of this world.

So in our politics and in our business and our educational institutions and the arts and the sciences, in media and communications, and especially in the teaching of theology, in this, in this culture, we take all of that seriously and we pray with all of our hearts. God destroy lives that destroy people and raise up servants in churches like this to serve at all of those institutions and all those media, the many ways of advancing the Kingdom of God.

And lastly, when we pray, your kingdom come, we have to pray not only with a burden, but with a big smile on our face. Lord Jesus, come quickly and we're eager for his arrival. One of your

members said to me after the first service in the narthex. She said, I've got siblings who are not Christians and I desperately want them to know him.

I said to her, I do to. And in fact, yesterday in my walk, I was praying, Lord, your kingdom come in the hearts of my siblings. And I named them. But I said to her, as much as we've been given this assignment, to weep and pray for the lost, especially those that are close to us, nothing can keep us from eagerly seeking the glory of God, displayed in the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ over all of his creation.

That's what our hearts long for. And of course, we'll have a new family. Our affections will be assigned in different directions when we when we get home. Now we're assigned the burden of praying and weeping for the people that we love so much. But we must never let anything come between us and a desire to pray, to see him with our own visible eyes.

That's the glory of it all. Corrie team Boone prayed when I entered that beautiful city and the saved all around me appear. I pray someone will tell me it was you who invited me here. Ladies and gentlemen, that's what we're all about. National missions. World missions. Your personal mission, your family mission. Every moment of every day of your life. Lord, your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let us pray. Amen.

Father, we are deeply grateful for the majesty of your throne, that you rule over all that was, or is, or ever will be, and that your redemptive power is changing lives and has been for millennia. We pray for a massive advancement of your Kingdom. We pray that you would use us, first of all in our prayers that we know how to pray. Asking your Kingdom to come in all of its power. Asking you, Lord, to come in fresh and new ways and begin with us, each one of us, our church, our city, our country, and our world. We pray that all the majesty, all the glory, all the honor would be unto your name. For we make our prayer in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.