

Matthew 6:9-13

Therefore pray 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 today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

Dear friends in Christ Jesus:

Do you know how World War II started? Germany invaded Poland. Most people remember that from high school history, but do you know why Germany invaded Poland? They were invited to do so. At least that's what Hitler wanted the world to believe. On the night of August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1939, a small group of German operatives dressed in Polish uniforms seized a German radio station in Gleiwitz, Poland and broadcast a short anti-German message in Polish. Hitler used this as a pretext to invade Poland "for the sake of the Germans living there who wanted protection from anti-German sentiments." Everyone saw through Hitler's ruse, of course, and that's why Britain and France immediately declared war on Germany.

Would any nation really invite invasion? The Ukraine surely didn't when Russia invaded on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Israel didn't when Hamas invaded and committed all kinds of atrocities on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Nations don't invite invasion, they defend against it. That's what makes the Second Petition in the Lord's Prayer so interesting. When we pray, "**Your kingdom come,**" we're inviting invasion. That may sound scary, but it's actually a blessing for us. Let's find out how.

True or false? When we pray "**Your kingdom come,**" we're asking Jesus to reappear in glory on the Last Day and usher in Judgment Day. You're right if you answered, "True." This world is a battlefield. Satan and his demons have teamed up with evil governments and false prophets to keep unbelievers in the dark and to cause the loss of faith among Christians. Our foe is formidable. In the book of Revelation Jesus compared Satan to an enormous red dragon with seven heads (Revelation 12). It's no wonder we pray: "**Your kingdom come.** Hurry Jesus! Save us from Satan's onslaughts. Give us eternal rest from the heartaches our own sins have caused. And bring us to that blessed home in heaven where we'll never be frustrated, grumpy, or have back pain again!"

It's good that we keep inviting this invasion lest we forget it's coming with or without our invitation. The Apostle Peter reminded his readers: "**But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be dissolved as they burn with great heat, and the earth and what was done on it will be burned up.**" (2 Peter 3:10). Don't be like the Russian leader Stalin. He was warned by both Winston Churchill and his own Russian spy network that Hitler was planning an invasion of Russia in 1941. Even after 3.4 million German troops were seen crossing the border into Russia, Stalin still failed to order defensive measures. In the end, Russia managed to beat back the Germans, but those who are not prepared for Judgment Day will not be as fortunate. If we are found without faith on that day, we'll have to face God's wrath forever. And so when you pray, "**Your kingdom come,**" add this thought: "Today, Lord? Will you return today? If so, let me be ready."

So how exactly do we prepare for Christ's return? Well, how would you prepare for an incoming tsunami or hurricane? You wouldn't scurry around looking for your favorite high heels to pack up, or waste time wrestling your big screen TV into the pickup truck after receiving word that a devastating storm was going to hit in a matter of minutes, would you? No! You would gather up the necessities of life: bottled water, canned food, batteries to power your flashlights, before hustling for higher ground. Likewise, when we pray, "**Your kingdom come,**" it should remind us to stock up on spiritual necessities: not bottled water but baptismal water; not canned food but Holy Communion; and not batteries for your flashlight but the fuel of God's Word for your faith. These spiritual gifts cause us to stand firm on the Rock where we'll be safe from God's surging anger on Judgment Day.

But when we pray, "**Your kingdom come,**" we're not just inviting Jesus' invasion on Judgment Day, we're also inviting Jesus' invasion of our hearts right now. You see, God's "kingdom" is not so much a place as it is an activity; it's God's royal reign. Our sinful nature, of course, doesn't want this invasion. That sinful nature may have tried to convince you that you were too tired to come to church. Or it may be telling you right now that listening to this sermon is a waste of time. Your sinful nature doesn't want you to be kind and

compassionate. It doesn't want you to encourage others but to tear them down. And it won't stop clamoring for the throne of your heart until you die. Satan will make sure of that with his constant barrage of temptations.

So, what chance do we have against the Evil One whom Jesus compared to an enormous seven-headed dragon? Well, how did Jesus defeat Satan when he was tempted by Satan in the desert? He could have turned Satan away by calling in a battalion of angels. Or he could have called fire down from heaven on Satan. Instead, Jesus turned Satan away with the sword of the Spirit: God's Word. You and I have that powerful weapon at our disposal too. And so, when we pray, **"Your kingdom come,"** we're asking God to make us faithful in the use of his Word so that our faith is strengthened and we overcome temptation rather than fall for it.

But you know how tricky Satan is. He gets us to pray, **"Your kingdom come...but not yet, Lord.** There are still a few pet sins that I don't want to give up. There are a couple of people that I just can't forgive. You'll excuse me if I keep holding a grudge against them, won't you?" And so, we invite a limited invasion which is really no invasion at all. We often ask God to come on our terms not his, like the man stranded on top of his house after a flood who refuses rescue unless he can bring his big screen TV with him.

What is God to do with people like us? He should turn his back on us and throw us in hell. But he hasn't, rather look at what he has done. When Northern troops invaded the South during the Civil War, they demanded an oath of allegiance from any Southerner who wanted to sell his cotton for profit again. It's only normal that the occupying force would want some sort of guarantee that a former enemy wasn't going to use his proceeds to fund the ongoing fight against Union troops. But that's not how God operates. He pledges an allegiance of love to those who have rebelled against him. This is how God put it to the disobedient Israelites he had sent into exile: **"Look, I will save my people from the land where the sun rises and from the land where the sun sets, and I will bring them to settle in the midst of Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness"** (Zechariah 8:7b, 8). God has pledged his allegiance to you as well. This first started with his promise to Adam and Eve to send a Savior. He then fulfilled that promise by sending his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and pay for your sins. He pledged that allegiance to you personally when you were baptized. God put his name on you and forgave you. He promised to send the Holy Spirit who is working through the Word to turn your heart into a throne room for Jesus. Yes, God's kingdom has come. But we need to keep inviting its invasion with the Second Petition because Satan is always counter attacking to oust Jesus from our hearts.

Hitler wasn't really invited to invade Poland. He just made it look like he was. In the end he only wanted more territory for himself and could care less what the people of Poland thought about that. But our God isn't like that. He's not urging us to invite invasion because he wants to take over our lives and ruin it for us. Nor does he need our invitation before coming into our hearts. Indeed, left to ourselves we would never invite God to come. But in his love God invaded our hearts and created faith to trust his promises. We now want God's reign to grow stronger in our lives because Jesus' reign brings true freedom. This coming Friday we celebrate the freedoms we have in our United States of America—freedoms that many in this world do not have. But look at the freedoms that Jesus has given us: freedom from guilt, freedom from fear, freedom from worry and freedom to serve our loving king, Jesus. Rejoice in those freedoms you have as Jesus rules in your heart. With his help keep him there as you pray, **"Your kingdom come."** Amen.