
We begin with these very familiar words

Matthew 6.9–13 NIV 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.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Our reflections today are centered on verse 10

Matthew 6.10 NIV Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Perhaps the first thing you and I discover about ourselves is that we are full of desires, wants and needs

This starts pretty early on

You're born into this world, and very soon you discover that you're hungry... Magically, there's someone out there who feeds you. How wonderful! Clearly, the universe exists to take care of your desires!

And then, your stomach full, you discover that you want to close your eyes and go to sleep.... and so you do

And then after a while, you discover that your full tummy has produced a full diaper, which is rather uncomfortable and pungently aromatic

At the same time, the happy comfort of a full tummy has given way to the unpleasant discomfort of an empty one...

And so you wake up and let the whole world know of your discomfort with the full capacity of your lungs ...

And you cry until your desires at both ends are taken care of...

And so it begins...

As we get older, our desires increase in range and intensity

And we learn more and more sophisticated ways to get what we want

And that's what success in this life is all about, or so we imagine

Getting what we want...

And so, right from birth, we are focused on getting what we want

Sometimes it works out and we're happy

Other times it doesn't, and we're frustrated, angry...

As we grow up, we realize the difference between good and evil

And so we try to make sure that most of our desires and plans fit into good ethical categories - health, wealth, friends, family, career, fun, travel, philanthropy, community service, and so on...

And we ask God to bless us and make these good dreams come true

But here's the truth of it

As long as I'm out to get my own way, no matter how good and noble my plans and purposes... My deepest, most real prayer is this:

My kingdom come...

My will be done... And then it will be heaven indeed

At a conscious and unconscious level, we've internalized this idea that pursuing our our own kingdoms is what life is all about

This is seen as natural, normal [**Story: Kosuke Ishii**]

Now to achieve what I want, it may be that you don't get what you want

Because my desired kingdom is often in conflict with your desired kingdom, we compete with one another

And we come up with nice-sounding ways for all of us to get what we want - let's negotiate a win-win, right?

But deep down inside we're only truly satisfied when my win is better than your win

This is our default setting: we're pursuing our own kingdoms

And this pursuit of our own kingdoms runs deep - it infuses every bit of who we are, conscious and unconscious

According to James, this is the source of just about all the trouble in the world

James 4.1–2 MESSAGE Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it.

Now he's writing to Christians, to those who are actually serious about following Jesus

And he's using very pointed words to get below the surface

Because along with this intense pursuit of our own kingdoms, we're also passionately committed to **pretending** that we aren't, really

We come up with very creative pseudo-spiritual ways to disguise our pursuit of our own kingdoms

Because Jesus followers don't do that sort of thing, right?

But until we come to grips with the true condition of our hearts, we are simply fooling ourselves that we're really following Jesus

That's the first and most crucial bit of self-awareness that we need if we are to understand prayer, says Jesus

Without this insight into our own condition, prayer simply becomes one more tool or technique in our pursuit of our own kingdoms

Prayer becomes a transactional interaction with God

Prayer becomes our attempt to persuade God to help us to build our own kingdoms

Here's what I want... and maybe God can help me get what I want

And I assume God wants certain things from me in return

So I try to negotiate a win-win with God

I'll give him what he wants - I'll go to church when i can, I'll give him some of my money, I'll give him some of my attention, I'll get involved in prayer meetings

And hope that he comes through for me and gives me what I want

That transactional understanding of prayer misses the point altogether

And then we're unpleasantly surprised and very disappointed when God doesn't seem to hold up his end of the bargain

And we discuss and debate the mystery of unanswered prayer, and come up with sophisticated ways to explain it away

But listen once more to James...

James 4.1-3 NIV What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

So the first insight we need if we are to truly enter into prayer is this:

We are deeply self-centered people by default, and we are constantly pursuing our own kingdoms - consciously and unconsciously

We don't really like this insight - it seems gloomy and self-critical...

We don't like thinking of ourselves as intrinsically selfish creatures...

But this drive to pursue our own kingdom in all things is deep and powerful and sophisticated and subtle

For instance, consider prayer - since that's our focus in this series

You might look at me and see a man of prayer... And it might certainly seem that my prayers are unselfish, and not at all about myself, and focused on God's kingdom, and not my own

But you might not know this: **my true heart's desire is to be known and respected as a man of prayer...** that's what I really want

And so I'm willing to pray for anything... and for anyone... and anytime... as long as it helps me build this reputation of being a prayer-warrior... a man of prayer

We are very good at re-framing our own desires to sound spiritual

Which then legitimates our all-out pursuit of our own kingdoms

Does this sound harsh?

Perhaps we're overthinking it? Perhaps the weather has made us morbidly introspective, and we need a bit of sunshine to get us back on track?

No... this is the reality of how sin has infiltrated into the depths of our heart and mind and soul and body

To not be aware of the depth of our problem leaves us utterly compromised... we're in deep trouble and we don't know it

Because this pursuit of our own kingdom leads relentlessly to death

Matthew 16.24–26 NIV Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

This is why when Jesus begins with very pointed words, when he begins to teach us to pray

Before he begins to teach us **how to pray**, he first tells us **how not to pray**...

Matthew 6.5–8 NIV “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Prayer itself, says Jesus, can easily get corrupted by our self-centeredness

In fact, it is in the spiritual life, it is in being on mission, it is in the outward actions of the Christian life that our deep-rooted self-centeredness finds its perfect hiding place

I mean, it would be hard for me to convince you that my pursuit of unfettered sexual freedom is all part of me pursuing God’s kingdom

On the other hand, how could you possibly question my commitment to prayer? Or to being on mission?

You see what I mean?

Listen to how Eugene Peterson puts it in the Message

Matthew 6.5–9 MESSAGE “And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?”

“Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.”

“The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply.”

And so we come to our text for today

Matthew 6.9–10 NIV This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”

So prayer begins with us acknowledging the very real difference between our kingdoms and God’s kingdom

And then setting aside our own kingdom, and longing for God’s kingdom to come to us, in us, around us

Your kingdom come, your will be done

Not my kingdom... not my will

But here’s the real question: how is this even possible?

How can my heart, which is deeply committed to self-centeredness, possibly say these words honestly?

What could possibly transform a deeply self-centered heart like mine into this kind of honest and joyful surrender?

We'll come to that in just a moment

But this is how we begin to enter into real prayer, with eyes wide open to our constant pursuit of our own kingdoms

And so, before we pray "your kingdom come, your will be done in this situation", we must first ask him to help us discern our own hidden or not-so-hidden will and desire and kingdom

Help me see clearly the particular ways in which I'm pursuing my own kingdom... and help me set those aside

And help me surrender to you

Your kingdom come, Lord... not mine

So we've got to begin with an honest look at our own hearts...

And here we desperately need the help of the Holy Spirit

Listen to David - who grasped the complexities of the heart like few others

Psalm 139.23–24 NIV Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Search my heart, God... because when I search my own heart, I'm really good at cover-up, pretense and denial

So here's where we begin

Where am I pursuing my own kingdom, Lord, instead of yours?
Search my heart, show me...

Where am I pursuing my own kingdom, while pretending to pursue yours? Search my heart, show me...

And then, what is your desire, your kingdom in this situation, Lord?

Your kingdom come, your will be done... I surrender to you, Jesus

But remember the question that surfaced earlier?

How do we get there, honestly?

How can my heart, which is deeply committed to self-centeredness, possibly say these words honestly?

What could possibly transform a deeply self-centered heart like mine into this kind of honest and joyful surrender?

To answer that question, we must take a closer look at what surrender really means

On a superficial level, surrender might look like an act of the will

I'm **choosing** not to pursue my heart's desire

I'm going to surrender through sheer will-power

That's not the kind of surrender Jesus is inviting us into

The kind of surrender that Jesus is talking about has to do with the heart

Our desires and wants are layered

I see that donut, made of pure sugar and covered with pretty sugar

It looks good, it's still warm and soft, and it smells wonderful!

And I know that first bite is going to be incredibly good... a little taste of heaven

And right now, I so need to feel good, even for a moment...

Because I'm kind of stressed right now...

I've got issues that seem far too complex for me to handle, and I don't know what to do

But here's a donut... warm and soft and promising me heaven

And so I take that donut, and eat it... and it feel wonderful!

But then as the sugar hit dies down my anxieties and fears surface again... what am I going to do?

Reach for another donut, perhaps?

But you and I know that the better choice would be to go after the underlying issues

But we don't know how to do that, and we're stressed and anxious about all of that

And it is so much easier to reach for that next perfect donut

Jesus sees all our own attempts to satisfy our deepest desires as reaching for that next donut

He sees our pursuit of our own kingdoms as a frantic search for the perfect donut

This is deep stuff... donut theology, not meant for the faint-hearted

And instead of giving us that donut, Jesus offers to help us deal with the underlying issues

Because once they are dealt with, we can actually be at peace, and feel good about life at a level that no box of donuts will ever give us

OK - so what does he want us to do?

How is he going to help us with the stressful underlying issues of life that overwhelm us and drive us to donuts?

Jesus invites us to surrender...

... to his love for us

He invites us to simply consider the cross, and understand that we're deeply and fully loved, and forever safe with him

Listen to these words from Paul

Romans 8.31–39 NIV If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... no, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And when our hearts begin to yield to this incredible reality that God loves us - utterly, fully, comprehensively...

We begin to trust God when he says that our own kingdoms only bring us death... but his kingdom brings us life, real life, forever life

We begin to relax, let go of this death-grip we have on pursuing our own desires...

We don't quite know how God is going to solve all our problems for us, or fix these insanely stressful situations in our lives

But a simple trust begins to form within us - you love me, Jesus, you really do... and we discover in the noise and clamor of the anxieties and fear within us a new clear simple melody of trust... we are beginning to trust Jesus for real

And so we taste the freedom of genuine surrender - a surrender of the heart to the love of God revealed to us in Jesus, poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit

And it is then that we begin to be able to honestly pray

Matthew 6.10 NIV Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Your kingdom come, Jesus - in the midst of the stress and anxiety
and fear that constantly overwhelm me, that I'm trying to fix by
myself... Your kingdom come, your will be done

Because you love me... you really do

And I trust you... I'm beginning to

And I know now that your kingdom, not mine, is the deepest desire
of my heart

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes this heart-transformation in vivid words

Ephesians 2.1–3 NIV As for you, you were dead in your
transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you
followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom
of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are
disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time,
gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and
thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

We were pursuing donuts, and it was destroying us, killing us

But God's love for us could not be denied

Ephesians 2.4–7 NIV But because of his great love for us, God,
who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we
were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.
And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the
heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages
he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed
in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

He rescued us, saved us so that he could spend eternity showering us with kindness, with grace, with love...

And so Paul prays for us, that we would understand the love of God for us

Ephesians 3.14–19 NIV For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

This is where true prayer begins...

... with being soaked up in the love of God... until our insecurities, and fears, and anxieties, and desires to look good, or be admired and respected, our longing to be seen as a success or as spiritual... all fade away... because we are loved, and we know it

And then these words come bubbling out of the depths of our hearts - Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

Passages

Psalms 23.1 NIV The LORD is my shepherd; I lack nothing.

Psalms 23.6 NIV Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Matthew 11.28–30 MESSAGE Jesus said: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. **Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.** I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Matthew 6.10 NIV Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
