

Week 3 – thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done.

Matthew 3:1-11 and Matthew 6:9-13

Thy Kingdom come.

When we pray these words, we are praying for God's kingdom to be established in all its fulness. We are actually praying for the return of Jesus, the ending of this age and the beginning of the eternal kingdom for everyone, everywhere.

Which can seem a bit heavy.

However this is the nature of the prayer. It both grapples with cosmic, eternal themes, and the immediacy and need of our lives today.

The prayer reflects:

The Transcendence of God - Our Father in heaven.

The Otherness of God – hallowed by your name (holy, separate)

The Sovereignty of God – your kingdom come.

God is Transcendent, Holy and Sovereign

And yet the prayer is real and immediate and personal to us.

The Transcendent and Holy One is 'our Father' and his rule and reign can encompass our lives and our situations.

Your kingdom come is both the future consummation of the Kingdom and also a present experience.

On Tuesdays at Morning Prayer we pray;

O God, who set before us the great hope that your Kingdom shall come on earth and taught us to pray for its coming: give

us grace to discern the signs of its dawning and to work for the perfect day when the world shall reflect your glory.

While we wait for the Kingdom to come in all its fulness and pray for its coming, we look to see signs of it here and now.

What do we mean by God's Kingdom?

On Wednesdays at Morning Prayer, one of the responses as we come into prayer says;

*You love righteousness and justice:
May your loving kindness fill the earth.*

These are hallmarks of God's kingdom.

God is love. Love, must therefore characterise his kingdom.

Righteousness, Justice, Loving kindness.

Mercy. Grace. Peace. Joy and so on.

Where we see these values displayed and lived out, we glimpse God's Kingdom.

The next few words of the Lord's prayer though make it personal. Thy will be done.

Not surprisingly, this can be where some get tripped up. How can we really know God's will?

After I left school I went to work full-time in the Fish and Chip shop the family owned at that time. I worked with my father. Of course I knew him as well as any child can know a parent, but working together added another layer of relationship and understanding. I knew him very well and I actually sounded like him. On the phone people couldn't tell which of us had answered.

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Once I was a little older, Dad would go out for the day, take a weekend off, then have holidays leaving me in charge.

I had to place orders.

I had to solve problems.

I had to do the banking.

I had to run the business the way Dad wanted the business to be run. And I knew what to do, because I knew my Father.

One time the drains became blocked. Dad was not the sort of person to get straight onto Dyno-Rod...he would have a go to fix it first.

So after the shop closed and we had cleaned the place down, there I was at 1am in the morning lifting the manhole covers to see what I could see – actually...it was to feel what I could feel in a deeply unpleasant void full of potato peelings and fishy water. I discovered a green pan scrubber blocking the drain, neatly held in place by a whole potato that had dropped down. Problem sorted.

Last week the sewer at the vicarage overflowed again. I can advise I did NOT get the manhole cover up and reach down to find out what was going on. Just as well...the blockage was up on Parkside Road.

The more time we spend with God, in worship, in prayer, in reading his word...the more easily we discern his will. As ever there's another kingdom layer to it. God wants us to build community to reflect His kingdom, so knowing God's will is designed to be a corporate event. Last Saturday the PCC had an away day and I am busy writing a newsletter to everyone about the topics we discussed. One was the plans for building and creating the community hub. We agreed together the next steps.

Thy will be done is easy to say and we do mean it. The struggle can come when the challenge is directly personal, and the struggle can be because of the influences upon us. Which leads me to Wallace and Gromit.

In the film – “The curse of the Were-Rabbit,” Wallace, the inventor has created the Mind Manipulation-O-Matic ...to extract unwanted thoughts and desires or as he describes it, “just a little harmless brain alternation that's all”. He thinks it might help him lose weight.

Wallace and Gromit are running Anti-pesto, protecting the villagers vegetables from rabbits. They've caught a large number and he is too soft hearted to kill them.

In a brainwave – literally – he realises he can use his Mind Manipulation-O-Matic to alter the brains of the bunnies turning them against the vegetables.

Of course it backfires and Wallace becomes like a rabbit and a rabbit becomes like Wallace.

Before you think I've gone completely crazy, this is what happens to us. Not to do with vegetables, but concerning the values of the world in which we live.

We are supposed to be living out the values of God's kingdom and seeking His will to be done, but the world is fighting back, influencing us to its own selfish self-centred values and a very different will indeed.

Of course we cannot see what we are blind to and it's only spending time with God, in worship, in prayer, in the bible and with each other that our eyes can be opened to see how the world is shaping our values – not God's kingdom.

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This is what was central to John the Baptist and his ministry. The kingdom of heaven is near – BUT you need to repent and lead lives that bear the fruits of repentance.

While preparing, I typed into Google “What will make me happy” and clicked on the one that said 15 ways to make your life happy.

I didn’t object to “be kind”, “love those around you” but I did notice most of them were about putting yourself and your happiness at the centre. Nowhere did it recommend repentance.

God’s kingdom is one of lasting joy, even though we might suffer, mourn and have struggles He is with us. But you can’t skip the need to be right with God and repentance is right at the heart of it.

Before we can truly pray “Thy will be done” we have to surrender our ego and putting ourselves first.

Jesus struggled with the demand of the coming crucifixion and prayed earnestly in the garden of Gethsemane for God to take this away...but ended his prayer “your will be done”.

We can have passionately held feelings, we can feel we are 100% right about exactly what God’s will is. BUT. Praying “thy will be done” safeguards us when we might not have it right. Collaborating and working as a community is another safeguard.

Ultimately, thy Kingdom come thy will be done is about surrender to the Father in heaven. And it’s shown brilliantly in the film Bruce Almighty.

Bruce has had God’s power for a while and consequently made a mess of his own life and everything else. He’s also lost his girlfriend Grace. He tries everything in his power to get Grace back but fails and his failure and unhappiness brings him to a place of complete surrender.

Rather foolishly, he surrenders in the middle of a highway and gets hit by a truck.

Up in the limbo land he meets God and God invites him to pray and hands him back some prayer beads he threw away.

His first attempt at prayer is formulaic and insincere and when God says “what do you really care about” he admits it’s Grace, the girl he loves and has lost.

Instead of asking for her back...Bruce is truly able to pray for Grace for her own sake.

He wants Grace to be truly happy, and he lets go of what he wants in the process. And....well you will have to watch the film.

Your kingdom come your will be done is the ultimate test of our willingness to repent, surrender and seek God so that “on earth, things are as they are in heaven” And I’ll say more on the topic next week.

But for now – an invitation.

In the film God says to Bruce – “what do you really care about”.

Lets bring it to mind.

Hold before God

Can we pray it?

Your will be done.