

Your Kingdom Come
Matthew 6:9-15
Key Verse: 6:10

by Sarah Barry

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

These are critical times in our country, not just because of the approaching election or the financial meltdown in our economy, but because the Christian values on which our nation was founded are eroding. The history of our nations' beginning, the story of how God blessed and used our country, is being deliberately rewritten to leave God out. Sometimes we feel angry and frustrated. As we approach this national election, we wonder for whom we should vote. I wonder if my one vote will make any difference. But I will vote anyway. And we can do something. We can pray. 1Timothy 2:1-4 say, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth..."

How then, shall we pray? Jesus taught us by his example. He rose up early in the morning and found a lonely place and prayed. (Mk1:35) When he faced arrest and death he prayed in the garden. He prayed that God's will, not his own human preference, be done (Mt 26:42). On one occasion, he went up a mountain and crowds of people came to him. His disciples also came. He sat down and began to teach them. Among the things he taught them was how to pray.

Luke 11 tells us that they asked him to teach them to pray. Today we will study the Lord's prayer and think about Jesus' own prayer topics, the prayer topics he shared with his disciples and us. Verse 9a says: "This, then is how you should pray." Let's read verses 9b-13. "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 have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." The prayer topics may be divided into two parts. The prayer is addressed to our Father God. The first part of the prayer shows us God's concerns, what he wants--the big picture. The second part are prayer topics for our concerns--the basic things we need as human beings.

Part One: "Our Father in heaven" (9b)

This prayer begins by affirming our relationship to God. He is our Father; we are his children. He loves us and protects us and provides for us. We are brothers and sisters who care about and pray for each other. This prayer is addressed to God our Father. We are not talking to ourselves. We are not trying to connect with some vague spiritual world. We are talking to the One who made us, our Creator. He is there and he is listening. Moses said, "Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?" (Dt 32:6) Jesus always called God, "Father" and he invites us to approach him as our loving heavenly Father. He knows what we need and wants to give it to us even before we ask. He loves us. He wants to have a personal relationship with us. He commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength. To know God is to have eternal life. When we pray, "Our Father," we are praying not just for ourselves, but for all of our brothers and sisters--fellow Christians and fellow human beings. All of us need God.

Part Two: The prayer topics which concern God's person and purpose (9b-10)

"Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

1. "Hallowed be your name." (9c)

To pray, "Hallowed be your name" means that we come to God with deep reverence and respect. "Hallowed be your name" means that we long for and pray that all creation may honor and respect and worship the holy God. The 10 commandments teach, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God..." We must not carelessly use his name. We who bear the name "Christian" must live like Christians. God is holy. He is righteous and good. God is

not a force. He is a person. He has a name and a personality. His Name is special. Abraham called him, "El Shaddai", Almighty God. He revealed his name, "the I AM"-YHWH, the LORD, to Moses when he sent him to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Hebrew people regarded God's name as too holy to speak, so they removed the vowels from (Yahweh) YHWH so they could not say his name. Moses took off his sandals when he approached the Holy God in the burning bush. But, God is also a God who hears and knows and cares. He is the Redeemer. He redeemed Israel from slavery to sin by his strong right arm. He redeems us from slavery to sin by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. He wants mankind whom he created in his own image to love and serve him freely and be thankful and happy. We must fear him and love him, for to fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We must include him in our important life decisions--in fact, in all of our decisions. To know him, to have a personal love relationship with him is eternal life. "Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

2. "Your kingdom come." (10a)

We pray for Jesus' second coming, when he will come in power and glory with the holy angels to judge the earth and establish his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. But this prayer topic is also a prayer for the extension of God's kingdom in the hearts and lives of the people of the world. Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 4:17). He went throughout Galilee proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, healing every disease and casting out demons (4:23). The kingdom was near because the King had come. He worked and prayed to plant the kingdom of God in the hearts of men and women. His kingdom is where he rules. God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. Jesus is the King. When Jesus was questioned by Pilate, he said, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (Jn 18:37) May God call men and women in our colleges and universities to be truth-seekers. May he raise up people who can stand on the side of truth. May he give us leaders who stand on the side of truth. God is ruling in the hearts of those who acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord. We enter his kingdom when we believe his gospel and are born again by the Holy Spirit. Jesus told Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth. No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit...you must be born again." (Jn 3:5) Surely Jesus had this prayer, "Your kingdom come," in his heart when he told his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of every nation. When we pray this prayer, we are committing ourselves to follow Jesus who wants to extend his kingdom into the hearts of all the people of the world.

3. "Your will be done." (10b)

Jesus taught us to pray, "Father, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Jesus himself said, "Here I am...I have come to do your will O God." (Heb 10:7) He said, "I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me." (RSV Jn 5:30) When Jesus prayed in the Garden he prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." To pray, "Your will be done" is a decision to accept the sovereignty of God, to obey his word and follow his leading. We pray that God's will may be done in this upcoming election. We pray that no matter who is elected, God may work to accomplish his will in this country. May he rule and overrule the actions of men. May God's will be done in and through his Church. May his Church be an instrument of peace, of righteousness and of God's compassion among the nations of the world.

We also pray that his will be done in our personal lives. What is God's will? 1Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always, give thanks in all circumstances, pray without ceasing, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." It is God's will for us that we rejoice, that we not be gloomy or regard ourselves as victims. It is God's will for us that we give thanks. Failure to be thankful resulted in the sin that plunged the human race downward to destruction (Ro1:21; Ge 3:5,6). God's will for us is that we maintain close communion with him through prayer.

How can we know God's will? John 7:17 says, "If anyone chooses to do God's will he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." If we want to know God's will, we must first make a decision of faith to obey God's will. Abraham left his home country and went to the land God showed him because God told him to do so. Rebecca made a decision to follow Abraham's servant to the land of Canaan to marry Isaac because she listened to the servant's testimony and realized that this was God's will. She had never seen even a picture of Isaac. And after she married him, she never doubted that their marriage was God's will.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul tells us that we can discern God's good, pleasing and perfect will when we remember God's mercy and offer ourselves to God. We can find God's will when we do not conform to the pattern of the world but

are transformed by the renewing of our minds. We cannot change ourselves. Husbands can't change wives. Wives can't change husbands. Co-workers can't change each other. We can't even change our children. God does not ask us to change each other. He is the one who can change us. He wants us to come to him with repentant hearts. He wants to work in us to transform us by the renewing of our minds.

Again, how can we know God's will? Jesus' commands teach us God's will. He said that the greatest commandment is "Love God" and the second one is "Love your neighbor." He commanded us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. (Mt 5:44) He told his disciples, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (Jn 13:34)

Jesus also commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. God loves the world. "God our Savior,...wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."(1Ti 2:3) World mission is God's will. It is God's will to give the gospel of God's love and salvation to the Muslim people. It is God's will to pray for them. It is God's will to give the gospel of God's love to the people of North Korea and to pray for them.

Part Three: Prayer topics for our personal needs (11-13)

1. "Give us today our daily bread." (11)

The economic crisis in our country and in the world is a big topic of conversation. It seems to preoccupy the media. They say that the material issue will decide the presidential election. Maybe so, maybe not. We spend a lot of time thinking about material things. Our Father knows that we need material things. He tells us not to worry about what we eat or what we drink or what we wear. Godless people run after these things, but our heavenly Father knows that we need them. He promises that if we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, all that we need will be given us (Mt 6:25-33). God does not need anything from us. He is the owner of all things. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. (Ps 50:10) He wants us to remember that he is the Source, the Giver.

Moses said to the people of Israel: "Remember how the Lord your God led you...he humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna...to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord...know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.." (Dt 8:2-5) He wants us to depend on him, to ask him; and he wants us to thank him. He wants us to come to him every day--not once a month, or once a week. He taught the people of Israel to depend on him for daily bread. He gave them manna from heaven, but they had to go out early every morning and collect the manna for the day. If they were greedy and got too much, it would spoil. If they were lazy and didn't go out early enough, the manna would evaporate and they would go hungry. He wants us to have daily fellowship with him. We bow our heads and thank him for our food each time we eat. God wants us to trust him and depend on him and thank him. And he wants to have daily fellowship with us. Prayer and Bible study are the spiritual daily bread. Lord, give us this day our daily bread. Thank you.

2. "Forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors." (12,14,15)

Luke's gospel makes this prayer more clear: "forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." (Lk 11) This prayer topic is repeated in verses 14 and 15: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." We need to forgive and be forgiven. Forgiving those who have sinned against us is not easy. Acknowledging that we are sinners and accepting God's grace of forgiveness is also not easy. It challenges and breaks our pride. Jesus came to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. On the cross, he prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel. It is why Jesus came. If we do not repent and accept his forgiveness we can have no part in him.

Ten years after WWII ended, two peacemakers visited a group of Polish Christians. They asked if they could meet with other Christians from West Germany who wanted to ask forgiveness for what Germany did to Poland during the war. They wanted to build a new relationship. One Polish man spoke up. "What you are asking is impossible. Each stone in Warsaw is soaked in Polish blood. We cannot forgive." Before the peacemaker group left, however, they prayed together the Lord's Prayer. When they came to this phrase, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who

sin against us," they stopped. They had to forgive, or they could not pray the Lord's Prayer. We cannot hold on to grudges or nurse old wounds and pray the Lord's Prayer. We must forgive, be forgiven and be healed.

3. "...Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (13)

We need God's help to flee temptation and to defeat the devil. We cannot trust ourselves to overcome temptation. We are all sinful human beings. We need God's help. We must avoid temptation. Some people want to see how much they can get away with and still not actually commit a sin. They don't avoid tempting situations, but actually enjoy them. But Jesus teaches us to pray to God to help us avoid temptation. The evil one is always out there like a roaring, prowling lion seeking someone to devour. We must not take him lightly. We must ask God to protect us and to protect our children and our sheep.

The conclusion of this prayer is in the footnote: "for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Our God is the Eternal God. He was and is and always will be. We come to God in prayer, confident that he is able--he has the power--to answer our prayers. We come seeking his glory, not our own. We come to affirm that he is the King forever. We are his subjects. We want to obey him. The kingdom is his. We have come into his Presence to worship him. Indeed, the upcoming elections are important. But it is most important that we commit ourselves to worship and obey our King Jesus. We must come to our Father God with prayer topics for ourselves and for our fellow Christians.

Last week some of us attended a KIMNET conference in LA. It was a prayer conference and the theme was "Embrace the nations." It was a call to pray for the nations of the world. We heard challenging and inspiring messages. But most importantly, we were reminded to pray for the nations of the world. Let us continue to pray with God's prayer topics for ourselves and for the nations of the world. And we must go to the nations of the world with the unchanging gospel because our King commands it. May God's kingdom come. May God make North America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Come, Lord Jesus.

"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 have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."--for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.