

Hello and welcome to the seventh podcast in the series for Thy Kingdom Come recorded for and by St Marys church in Richmond, Yorkshire.

We are in the season between Ascension and Pentecost and I said yesterday that in today's podcast we would look at The Lord's Prayer: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

It is the most repeated of prayers, we know it, we say it, we pray it, some say it at least once in every single day. It will feature even more prominently than usual in this Sunday's 10:00 service – tune in to find out how!

What better words to consider in this season of Thy Kingdom Come.

Much of all our prayer is that something is done, something will happen, something will change. And there is (of course) a clear and certain desire at this time to see change, in God's name to see change, so that we defeat the Coronavirus, that we get out of lock down, that we return to work, our businesses schools and shops reopen, the strain on our hospitals is eased. And then perhaps we pray and deal properly with poverty, injustice and environmental destruction. For now we share the cry of Psalm 13: How long O Lord?

The first word of the Lord's Prayer is totally of the moment, in tune with much the hurt we all presently feel. This key prayer starts not with the word 'my' but with the word 'our'. *Our* Father, who art in heaven. Not *My* father who art in heaven. I could pray to my father in heaven, Jesus did: My God, My God. But better still is to recognise the key fact that we are not alone, we do not pray alone, we worship and serve together with each other, we are the church, a family in Christ. And right now it hurts that we are physically separated and we are not as free to worship and serve as easily as we would wish and pray that we could. We miss each other. This pain and desire is relentless and has not left us unresponsive: We have taken to Zoom and Whatsapp and Google and podcasts, and phones and emails, the family under Christ has ensured that my journey in faith has remained our journey in faith through these difficult times.

'Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name.' This completes the introduction, the identity of who we are praying to: A God, the one God, in heaven. Even something as small as his name is hallowed, is special. Even his names is special? My name is certainly not hallowed, indeed it's not even the first one I was given. For about a day I was *James* Scott Lunn. That was until my Grandma met me and said I couldn't be called James Scott as this was the name of her milkman, and so my names were swapped. My sons continue the Scottish link: The first is Alastair James, the second is James Andrew, the third is Andrew Benjamin, and the dog is Benjamin, just Benjamin. God's name is more serious, it is the name of the hallowed God and to him we address our prayer.

The prayer has a beginning and, of course, and end: A reminder of the one God who has the kingdom, the power and the glory through the good times and the bad times and for ever and ever, amen (let it be so).

What about the bit in the middle, the filler for our sandwich, the prayer that we put before God, the request that we make?

I wonder if you like me have rationed the TV news. I do watch it each day but only for a while, enough to get the main updates but much of it is the same: There's a very real threat surrounding our world and we are still confused about the way to get through it. It seems a long time since the news was made up of several *different* stories finished off by the sport and then the weather.

Do you remember the story, last year, of the Whaley bridge dam in Derbyshire. It was about to collapse and 6½ thousand people needed to evacuate their homes. Frantic work was done to the dam and the collapse was averted although for a week it seemed touch-and-go. The consequences of the dam bursting and giving way would have been severe. Ask those 6 days ago in Michigan in the USA where a dam did burst and 10000 people have had to move out of their homes. Or the year before in Brazil when 300 people died when they were overcome by water and mud following a dam collapse. Some have long enough memories to remember the damage caused by the dambuster raids deep into enemy Germany in World War 2.

Now think of our prayer, The prayer, The request in our Lord's Prayer: "Your Kingdom Come", in other words, "Your will be done". I sometimes imagine that I am in a deep gorge next to a tall and slender dam behind which is a vast amount of water. What a brave prayer is mine as day by day I pray: bring it on, your kingdom come. Yesterday we heard the words of Psalm 24: Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Not me, not you. And if my prayer is answered, if the kingdom of God were to enter my life in all its fullness and power and glory, how could I stand, in the Face of this bursting dam I would surely be destroyed for my hands are not clean and my heart is not pure.

There is good news however in Psalm 130:

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.

This is where we find the completeness of The Lord's Prayer for we pray 'your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' *and we are compelled in the name of self-preservation to pray 'give us this day our daily bread'* and what is our daily bread? 'forgive us, forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us'. This is the *daily* bread we need to give us the clean hands and a pure heart so that we can withstand indeed go with the flow when our prayers are answered and the kingdom of God is let loose and goes wild in our lives and world today.

So therefore we ask in prayer for God's will to be done but also, humbly yet with confidence, for the forgiveness of God that prepares us for the answering of this key prayer, the root of all our prayers.

Today we pray: Your kingdom come, your will be done. And so that we may be fully caught up with this answered prayer we ask this day for our daily bread of forgiveness. May we, with grace, share this same gift of patience and kindness and forgiveness and love with all those who we meet this day and for evermore, amen.