

After this manner therefore pray ye...

the Homespun of the Sincere

part two of three

Man is most truly himself, not when he struts about in pride of ability and possession, but when he sees himself as a creature of God and submits to the will of his Creator, which is his true happiness.

Warren A. Quanbeck

Consumed in His Will

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

We all have our little kingdoms.

Not long after I was mustered out of the Navy, I took a job at a camera store in downtown San Diego, California. It was owned and run by a belligerent cuss whose word was the law of the land. This being a time when there were far fewer laws and regulations protecting the employees of a small business, those of us in his employ were at his mercy. He could hire and fire at will, without cause—and often did. Harassment and intimidation were not only his management methods, but also his manner of doing business. Customers were sometimes browbeaten into making a purchase.

That man's store was his own little kingdom. Within it he could harass attractive female employees, cheat his customers, publicly and profanely abuse male employees, and in general make life miserable for everyone around him. Once a week (every Wednesday, as I recall) he even cheated on his wife—at the store. Within its walls he was king.

Though they may not be built in this same perverse image, we all have our little kingdoms, our own spheres of influence. The homemaker in her or his kitchen, the husband in his woodworking shop, the gardener among the rows, the teenager in his or her room—society is built upon the latticed, interwoven structure of our tiny fiefdoms. Jesus tells us, however, that we should be praying for the *Father's* kingdom to come—for His rule to be preeminent.

In process, God's kingdom is a bit like the Christian's salvation. There is a point in time at which the believer is "saved," that is, becomes a part of the body of Christ. Yet this point of salvation is usually followed by years of remaining precisely in the same station physically, living out a life much like one's neighbor. This time is spent slowly, methodically maturing and growing into the image of Christ. The Christian is technically "saved," but physically he is still a citizen of a fallen world. Only when he dies and enters through the gates of heaven is the Christian truly, finally saved: saved out of a world of sin, and saved from an eternity of torment. To put it in blunt terms, at the point of salvation the believer gets his pass into heaven, but the pass isn't actually punched until he dies—or until Christ comes to get him.

The process of God's kingdom is similar in that it exists now, in both heaven and (in a different form) on earth, but, on this side of the Rapture, the kingdom has not yet been fully realized.

God's "kingdom" or "reign" can refer to that aspect of God's sovereignty under which there is life. That kingdom is breaking in under Christ's ministry, but it is not consummated till the end of the age. To pray "your kingdom come" is therefore simultaneously to ask that God's saving, royal rule be extended now as people bow in submission to Him and already taste the eschatological blessing of salvation and to cry for the consummation of the kingdom.

D. A. Carson

Here we have the ultimate prayer of submission: *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Father, I acknowledge Your kingdom and will as superior; may the world bow to Your perfect reign, and may my will be consumed in Yours.*

The Bread of Life

Give us this day our daily bread.

But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:18-19

Here, in one brief segment at the end of one of his letters, the apostle Paul puts words to one of the deep mysteries of the Christian

faith—a mystery that befuddles everyone without, and confuses many within. How can Paul credit both the Philippians and God for his abundance? If they passed the hat and sent him the offering, then it couldn't be God. But if he thinks God did it, why is he thanking the Philippians?

There really is no good explanation that the world at large will accept, for the sentiment Paul expresses comes from the Spirit-filled heart, not temporal reason. It's not so hard to grasp the concept if we walk into the forest and express thanksgiving to God for the natural beauty surrounding us. We know that man did not manufacture the stately trees, the grass and foliage, the myriad birds and mammals that call the place home. The concept becomes more elusive, however, when we consider the same response to man-made things.

Stand in your front yard and look back at your house. If you are a typical homeowner, sometime back a stranger took his hard-earned money and paid a contractor to build the house. By the toil and sweat of his crew, and the funds of the owner, the builder set boards and paneling in place, laid shingles on the roof, and piped in electricity and water. After a period of time, the original homeowner decided to sell his house. You came along, added up your bank account and future earnings, and offered to purchase the house. You sold your

soul to the bank, then worked your heart out every day to make the mortgage payments, insurance premiums, utilities, and cost of general maintenance and upkeep. Yet, with the Spirit in residence, you stand on your front lawn, gaze upon the domicile you've purchased with your own sweat and toil, and give God the praise and thanksgiving.

But what does God have to do with it? And while we're at it, why should we give thanks to Him for food we purchased with our own money, or grew with our own hands? If we are the ones who buy the day's ration with our hard-earned paycheck, why would Jesus have us pray to the Father for our "daily bread"?

Your hands made me and fashioned me;
Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.
Psalms 119:73

Here is the full, unclouded depth of our association with Christ.

When we take Him as Lord, we are not agreeing to attend Sunday School every week, neither are we agreeing to contribute ten percent of our earnings to the collection plate. We're not saying, "I'll be good," or "I'll admit my sins." What we are saying is, "I now belong to the Lord Jesus Christ."

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Romans 14:7-8

Grass cannot call for dew as I do. Surely the Lord who visits the unpraying plant will answer to his pleading child.

Chares Haddon Spurgeon

When we become a son or daughter of the living God through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ; when we begin and sustain on earth the never-completed process of conforming to His image; when we ingest His mind, and strive for His vision; when we tune our hearing to His voice, tuning *out* the clamor of the world; when we give our lives over to His invasive yet comforting Spirit—then, and only then, are we able to see the powerful hand and gentle grace of God even in our own efforts. And, yes, we are able to ask Him for—and thank Him for—our daily bread.



concluded next week...

