

Intro: Now, I know for some of us, reading is right up there with root canals and broccoli. But I love to read...and over the last month and a half, among others, I've been reading through a book on the Lord's Prayer by Helmut Thielicke...I've quoted him a few times over the last few weeks. And in part, what makes his writing so gripping is where his life and ministry was located: both geographically and historically.

Thielicke was preaching through the Lord's Prayer, in Stuttgart, Germany, during the 2nd World War. The message he preached on "Your Kingdom Come" was preached in 1944, just days after both Stuttgart, and his church had been bombed and reduced to rubble by Allied air raids.

He begins his sermon in the following way: "Isn't there a comfort, a peculiar message in that, after all the uncontrolled fire that has swept through our wounded city, a sermon can still begin with these words: *We shall continue in our study of the Lord's Prayer.* We don't need to interrupt and search the Bible for texts appropriate to catastrophe. The words of the Lord's Prayer are immediate to every situation of life...The Lord's Prayer encompasses the whole world, and therefore it includes us too in this terrible exceptional situation of life in which we are all involved."¹

Probably this week some of us have gotten new jobs, and others have been let go. Some of us have recently been married, and others have just lost our spouses to divorce or to death. Some of you students are

excited about this new school year, and others wake up on Monday with a feeling of dread. Some of us couldn't be happier about life, some of us find ourselves in the pit of despair. As Thielicke says, "The Lord's Prayer encompasses the whole world, and therefore it includes us too".

We don't have to divorce our praying from our living...we don't have to do that with Jesus. Thielicke writes, "In this world of death, in this empire of ruins and shell-torn fields we pray: 'Your Kingdom come!' We pray it more fervently than ever."² I am praying this very thing for myself, for my family...and let me now pray it for us now.

Pray: for our people...comfort, release, courage...

Illus: By show of hands, how many of you have ever heard God being described as the King of the universe? I figured most of you would put up your hands. Here's a follow up question: how many of you can remember when God's kingship first affected your life?

I can remember very clearly. I was 10 years old when it happened, and I was sitting in my basement, in front of the t.v. My two brothers were with me and we were watching a new cartoon called **He-Man** and the Masters of the Universe. He-man was a muscle bound hero, with a magic sword in hand, and sought to protect others from the evil Skeletor and his minions.

¹ Helmut Thielicke, *Our Heavenly Father*, 55-56.

² Thielicke, 57.

And at some point during the show, **He-man** would stare into the camera and declare: *I am He-man...the most powerful man in the universe*. And then, predictably, he would start kicking bad-guy butt. Well, one day, just as **He-man** made his infamous declaration, my mom happened to be walking by and heard what he said...and the next thing I knew, the t.v. had been turned off.

And then my mom said something I have never forgotten: *Boys...there is only one master, one king of the universe and that's Jesus, and we're not going to watch any show that says otherwise*. I never watched **He-man** again...and nearly 30 years later, the truth has stuck with me: *there is only one Master, one King of the Universe and His name is Jesus*.

This morning I want to talk about this King, about His kingdom, and about what it means to pray for His kingdom to come. So let's begin by taking a look at this word: "King".

1. First, what do we mean when we call God "King"?

We need to remember that our experience of Kings and Queens, presents us with a very different picture than the one assumed by the writers of Scripture. Growing up in Canada, I might conclude that I'm some what of an expert on how a King or Queen functions in society...after all Queen Elizabeth's portrait is etched on every coin in my pocket.

A King or a Queen is someone very regal, very likable, very noble...they dress impeccably, they have impressive vocabularies,

they like to smile and wave to the crowds, and they generally make us feel proud. But in our day and age, Kings and Queens don't steer the ship or call the shots...for all intents and purposes, they are little more than figure heads.

Our scripture writers lived in a very different world; their experience of kingship was very different than our own. In their day, Kings had almost absolute power. They claimed the best of the land and the people for themselves. They ruled their subjects in the manner they thought best. They determined the laws of the land, they determined when it was time to go to war. Their favour meant life and prosperity, while falling out of their favour meant punishment and death.

All of this is attached to meaning of the word "King". We are so convinced of our inalienable right to vote, it can be hard for us to conceive of a time when rulers really did rule, with or without voter approval.

So when the Bible talks about God as *King*, we need to understand that God isn't a wave and smile, figure-head-kind-of-King; He has real power and authority. William Barclay writes, "To be a citizen of any kingdom, and to be a subject of any king, necessarily involve obedience to the laws of that kingdom and to the commands of that king."³

But having said that, when Jesus took on our flesh and blood and became human, He revealed God to be a different kind of King than we might expect. Jesus once said: *"You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority*

³ William Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer For Everyman*, 193.

over those under them. **43** But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”⁴

When God walked among us in Jesus, His leadership was as much about serving as it was about ruling. When God walked among us in Jesus, He didn't use His god-ness to His own advantage, He didn't bud to the front of the line, and He didn't step on the “little people”...He stood up for them. Jesus went after the lost and the broken, He prioritized children, and He loved people deeply from the heart.

He was not like most Kings, and if nothing else, you can see it by simply taking a look at His crown. He was fitted with a crown of thorns by a His executioners...and His coronation took place on a wooden cross. On the cross, above Jesus' head, they nailed a placard that read: *This is Jesus, The King of the Jews.*⁵

To pray for God's Kingdom to come begins with the recognition that God is King, He is the rightful ruler of all that is. But in this prayer of Jesus, we do more than recognize God's kingship, we ask for God's

kingdom to come to earth. And it needs to be said...a King with this kind of crown will likely have a different kind of Kingdom.

2. Second...What kind of Kingdom is God bringing as we pray?

Jesus' first sermon was short and to the point: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*⁶ This announcement was Jesus' way of saying, “God's promised reign is beginning,” or, “God is now taking control.”⁷

So let me pause here and ask the obvious question: *does that mean God wasn't in control before?* No...not exactly. The Bible tells us that God has created all that is, and He remains in control of all that He has made.

Psalm 103:19 says, “*The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*” Psalm 145:13 says, “*For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations.*” But...the biblical writers were not blind, nor were they naive about what they saw all around them...they knew that the world was not all as God intended it to be.

⁴ Mark 10:42-45, New Living Translation.

⁵ Matthew 27:37, New International Version.

⁶ Matthew 3:2, New International Version.

⁷ R.T. France, *NICNT: Matthew*, 102.

Hebrews 2:8 reminds us that “*At present we do not see everything subject to God...*” When we open our eyes, we see a world where violence and oppression continue. We see the carnage of narcissism and greed all around us. *At present we do not see everything subject to Him...* at present, submission to the rule of God rule is voluntary.

We do not live in a world where God’s name is universally hallowed...nor do we live in a world where His Kingship is universally recognized. The Kingdom of God is already here, but it is not yet complete...it has yet to be fully seen, enacted, and embraced.

Darrell Johnson writes, that the phrase *kingdom of God* “refers to a brand new world order, centered in God’s Messiah [Jesus], in which human beings are re-made into the image of God and all of creation *restored* to God’s original design.”⁸

Eugene Peterson writes, “*Praying “your Kingdom come” is the beginning of the revolt against the misrule of sin and Satan. It is not the end of this misrule, but the beginning.*”⁹

Ultimately, when we pray for God’s kingdom to come, we are asking for the world to be put to rights, back to the way He intended it, before our sin made a mess of things. When we pray for His kingdom, we are praying for healing, for wholeness, for peace, for reconciliation...we’re praying that the life of heaven will come to earth, we’re praying that all will see God’s Kingliness and choose

Him now, submitting to His rule. This is the kingdom God brings as we pray.

Now, let’s turn our attention to how we can pray for God’s kingdom to come over nations, over our church, and over our own lives.

a. Nations: In the spring of 2006 I had the opportunity, to travel to Cairo, to Doha, to Dubai, and Abu Dhabi. I had never been in a non-western country before and so I jumped at the chance to travel with a friend and do some ministry along the way. My friend had a sister and brother-in-law in Cairo and so we began our trip there. The first thing I noticed when I landed in Cairo was the heat. Over night, I had gone from 12 degrees in Calgary, to 40 degrees in Cairo. The second thing I noticed was the differences in our culture.

On one of the days, we got on Cairo’s version of the sky train so that we could visit the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities. I learned pretty quickly that western ideals about personal space and boundaries are not universally accepted. When the doors to the train opened, I got in and grabbed ahold of a hand rail. By the time the doors closed, I found myself locked in an embrace, totally against my will, in between two rather large, extremely sweaty Egyptian men. It was a cultural experience I haven’t forgotten.

The first night we arrived in Cairo, I staggered into bed, exhausted and jet-lagged, but I was startled awake the next morning, shortly before 5 a.m. Five times a day, devout Muslims are called to prayer.

⁸ Darrell Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words That Change The World*, 44.

⁹ Eugene Peterson, *Jesus and Prayer Lectures*, mp3 #F.

There are mosques scattered everywhere throughout the city, much like there are churches on every street corner in parts of the United States. And attached to these mosques are loud speakers which project the call to prayer into every corner of the city.

If you've never heard it before, the first experience is what I would describe as haunting. Here's the English translation of what I heard:

Allah is Most Great. Allah is Most Great. I bear witness that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to prayer. Come to Success. Come to Success. Allah is Most Great. Allah is Most Great.

Five times a day for nearly two weeks, I heard these words being broadcast. And as muslims were being called to pray, and I found myself being drawn to pray...not to Allah, but to the God who has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ. In part, I was praying for the Kingdom of Jesus to come...for His rule to be recognized and embraced.

My friend had a connection with a church in Cairo, and so we attended one of their Sunday services. And what struck me about the church building was that posted outside their walls, were Egyptian soldiers on duty, armed with M-16 semi-automatic rifles. Not long before, some radicals had tossed a grenade into one of the Sunday gatherings...it had failed to detonate, but the soldiers were there to discourage any more grenade tossing.

In Qatar, we spent a week teaching in a church and talking with native Qataris about Jesus. In the United Arab Emirates, we met with

international workers who are engaged in sharing the Good News concerning Jesus. Just a month prior to our arrival, one of these workers had been preaching at an Easter service where 300 people had made a 1st time decision to follow Jesus.

I came away from that trip with one lasting impression, and you might think it strange when you hear it. I came away from the Middle East with a strong sense of God's Kingship...He is King over every nation. His Kingdom is alive and even in countries where the soil is hard, kingdom seeds are growing and advancing. In March, our denomination, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, gathered leaders from all over the world in Turkey, to talk about the advance of God's kingdom. And following that week, I flew to Germany to spend the next 8 days with Ralph and Ruth Shareski, Alliance missionaries who are connected to our church.

It was such a privilege to spend time with them...I began my trip with the utmost respect for them, and I left Germany wanting to be like them; they remind me a lot of Jesus.

I recently asked them if they would put together a video update for us, to let us know what they are up to and how we can pray for them. And so I want to encourage you to turn your eyes towards the screen and take a look at two short videos they posted on *Youtube*.

Watch Videos (5 min)

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3SiT6wO5To>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvzag-iQAwY>

This morning I've been teaching about this praying for God's Kingdom to come...and now, let take a few minutes to join with those

around us in actually praying for God's Kingdom to come in Mannheim, in the nation of Germany.

I've got a few of Ralph and Ruth's prayer requests on the screen behind me, and I want to invite you to turn to a few people around you and begin to pray. Now praying with others will be new for some of you, it's okay for you to just listen...but don't worry, it isn't the eloquence of our prayers that God cares about...it's the faith with which we pray. I'll call us back together in a few minutes. **Pray**

b. Our Church/Lives: Now that we've prayed for God's kingdom to come over the nation of Germany, lets turn our prayer focus a little closer to home. What would it mean for us to begin to pray for God's kingdom to come in our church, or, in our individual lives?

Now remember...when we pray this prayer, we're not praying in vague generalities...we're praying for God's rule to be recognized and embraced in our midst, in our lives. William Barclay writes, "This is no prayer for the [person] who desires to stay the way [they are]."¹⁰

Like I said last week, when we pray for God's kingdom to come we end up praying against ourselves...against our desire for independence. I think many people in our age refuse to believe in the God portrayed by the Bible, not because the idea of God is ridiculous, but because the idea of this God is offensive...a Sovereign God requires willing subjects. The questions is: *are we willing?*

illus: If we are not careful, we can go about the kingdom much like we might go about ordering a salad. You order a garden salad, with the dressing on the side. Why on the side? Because then **we** have control...not too much, not too little...we end up with exactly what we want.

We may want the kingdom benefits: healing, wholeness, peace, love, reconciliation...but do we want a King? Do we want to bow? To submit? To follow? To obey? It might be kinda nice to have the kingdom with the King on the side...that way we can determine how much of Him we need or want.

It doesn't work that way...we cannot authentically pray for God's kingdom to come until we are willing to accept Him as King.

This kingdom-come-prayer is one that our elders board is praying constantly over our church. When we say that God is the primary leader of this church, we really mean it and we spend a significant amount of our time praying for His guidance and direction.

A number of weeks ago I quoted Eugene Peterson, saying, we know we are maturing in our praying when we begin to get bored with ourselves.¹¹ We stop praying "*God bless our ideas, bless our plans, bless our work...*", and we start praying, "*God what are Your ideas, what are Your plans, what are You working on?*"

As elders, we are praying this over our church, and as individuals, we can pray these same things over our families, over our own lives.

¹⁰ Barclay, 205.

¹¹ Peterson, mp3 #G.

Not, ““God bless my ideas, bless my plans, bless my work...””, but “God what are Your ideas, what are Your plans, what are You working on?”

illus: I was 19 when I first began to pray this way. When I was a young boy, I had invited Jesus to forgive me and save me from my sin, but it did not even cross my mind until I was 19 that He wanted to be more than a Saviour...He wanted to be the King, the Lord, the Leader of my life. And when I invited Him to lead my life wherever He pleased...a chain reaction started...one that is still going to this day.

Praying for God’s Kingdom to come is a highly dangerous act. This kind of praying leads to the toppling of nations; it is a prayer for God to subvert and destroy, any power that sets itself up against His rule. This kind of praying may lead us to follow God into new territory that we could never have imagined. This kind of praying will make us painfully aware of what we need to let go of, and of what we need to take up.

Jesus once said: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"¹² His kingdom is not for those who are content, it is for the desperate among us, for those of us who recognize how much we need Him.

And so we pray, ***Father, may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus, establish Your reign in our lives, in our church, and bring Your loving and perfect rule to our city, our country and to the nations.***

At this point I would like to invite Daniel and the worship team to come, and I would like to invite you to continue in an attitude of prayer. Daniel and the team are going to sing a song for us, and I want to invite you just to listen, to meditate, and to submit your life to God’s leadership. Maybe you’ve never actively invited God to lead your life, your whole life...make today the day and invite the Holy Spirit to begin a chain reaction in your life.

The Stand

You stood before creation, Eternity within Your hand
You spoke the earth into motion, my soul now to stand.

You stood before my failure, carried the Cross for my shame.
My sin weighed upon Your shoulders, my soul now to stand.

So what can I say? What can I do? But offer this heart O God,
completely to You.

So I'll walk upon salvation, Your Spirit alive in me
This life to declare Your promise, my soul now to stand.

So what can I say? What can I do? But offer this heart O God,
completely to You.

So I'll stand, with arms high and heart abandoned, in awe
of the One who gave it all.

¹² Matthew 5:3, New International Version.

So I'll stand, my soul Lord to You surrendered,
all I am is Yours.

Benediction