

What Many Believers Get Wrong About the Kingdom of God

When I hear my grandchildren recite the Lord's Prayer, I still sometimes get a little emotional. They don't yet fully understand what they're praying, but they say it with gusto: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." What are we praying for when we follow Jesus' direction to pray for God's kingdom to come to earth? Is that prayer ever answered? What kind of transformation does the kingdom of God bring?

The Bible talks a great deal about the kingdom of God. In our Western culture many Christians have moved away from that kind of language because of toxic religious ways the church has "interpreted" that in the past. But that doesn't lessen how important this reality is to God—and to us.

If you live in a country where there is a king, this idea means something more "real" to you than it may to those of us who live in a democratic nation. I have some friends who moved to this country from Great Britain some years ago. While the monarchy in Great Britain functions very differently than it did centuries ago, the idea of a king and a kingdom is uniquely powerful for them.

Jesus' primary message when He came to earth was, "The kingdom of God is near." (Mark 1:15) Jesus is called the King of kings and the Lord of lords. (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 19:16, and others) Do we fully embrace this aspect of what God is all about?

Here are a few things the transformation of the kingdom of God means for us now.

The Kingdom of God in Your Life

Knowing Jesus as your Savior is critical. It means Jesus has forgiven you and your name is written in the Book of Life. But is He also your Lord? The early Christian believers' proclamation was "Jesus is Lord," and it was one of the primary reasons they were persecuted and often killed. Are you proclaiming "Jesus is Lord" over your life?

Perhaps you haven't completely realized the implications of that statement. If you have taken Jesus as your Lord, then He's Lord of everything; your time, your money, your family, your marriage, your sex life, your work life, your leisure, your entertainment, your physical lifestyle (food, rest, exercise, etc.), your thinking, your emotions, your ministry, your future, everything. If there is some aspect of your life where things aren't going well, you might ask, "Am I trying to remain the lord of this part of my life? Have I truly made Jesus my Lord in this area?"

Distorted and toxic religion has tried to make church hierarchy, political or social policy, male "leadership" in the family, etc. the arbiter of the kingdom of God for individual people. All of those are gross distortions of what Jesus intended. There is godly order in all the dimensions of life, but that has nothing to do with human beings and human institutions trying to usurp God's authority in your life.

Wherever you struggle, I encourage you to make Jesus the Lord of that area of your life every day. Out loud, pray something like this every single day; "Jesus, I again take You as the Lord over every area of my life. I again consecrate my [marriage, sex life, finances, time, emotions, etc.] to You. I am not my own; I belong to You. And as my Lord, I will follow You today."

The Kingdom of God in the World

Political leadership, education, environmentalism or social justice may be partial results of the kingdom of God, but they are not the kingdom of God in themselves. Jesus said no outward expressions themselves are the kingdom, “because the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21) He made it very clear; “My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36)

The kingdom of God is not about what happens within the four walls of your church for a couple hours on the weekend; it’s about what people who have taken Jesus as their Lord do with the rest of the week and in the rest of their world. The request we make in the Lord’s Prayer about God’s kingdom coming to earth is not about how many people show up in your church this weekend; it’s about what you and others do the rest of the time.

I was challenged about this concept again recently by Ian Green. (You can hear my interview with Ian Green [here](#).) The kingdom of God, that reality that is “within you” and me, cannot remain hidden. It affects homes, schools, communities, businesses, cities, industries, nations, and everything else. It happens not through manipulation and control, but through the unstoppable impact of Who is living inside you as you get out of the walls of the church and into the world around you. (See Luke 13:21.)

Let me leave you with this challenge. Once you have turned your own life over to Jesus as your Lord, what next? As Ian Green said, if you’ve been saved for more than three seconds, there’s something you have to give, something you are called to do. What is it?

And now, what are you going to do about it?

Your Turn: In what area of your own life do you need to daily make Jesus your Lord? As a believer, what area of your world is God calling you to pray His kingdom into? What actions is

He calling you to take? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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