

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Notes from Rodney L. Barbour

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Theme: Pastor Alan writes: *Through the centuries, the Lord's Prayer has stood as a secure lighthouse in the midst of turbulent times, and a rock upon which we can build our lives. Simple enough for a child to memorize, it is profound enough to build one's life philosophy around. During the six weeks leading up and concluding the Sunday following Easter, we'll look at each of six petitions in depth to learn what we can about our Lord's Prayer. Today's focus will be on the phrase "Thy kingdom come"*

Preparation for Worship: As we consider the kingdom of God, we remember in Matthew 6 Jesus is teaching about worry. He instructs his listeners to not worry about what they will eat or drink or wear. He comments about the birds in the air, the lilies of the field and God clothes the grass of the field with them. His point is to "seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." As we praise God through today's opening song, we realize that though we seek God's kingdom of heaven, God's kingdom is also here and present now to us through Jesus Christ. Here are some of the words:

God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
Wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace;
Here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence as in speck,
Here, in newness and renewal God the Spirit comes to each.

Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,
Keep us faithful to the gospel, help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
We who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

Call to Worship: Today's Call to Worship combines familiar scripture passages from Philippians 2 and Revelation 11 (used in Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus!*). God has established his kingdom and given us victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus has been exalted to the highest place and his name is above every name, we exalt his name in our worship time this day. One day every knee will bow before Him in worship and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. You can join in this praise and adoration today in our worship. If you have questions or hunger to know Jesus more, please speak to Pastor Alan or one of our staff following worship today.

Leader: Lord God, you have exalted Jesus Christ to the highest place and have given Him a name that is above every name, that *“at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

People: The kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever!

Hymn of Praise: Today’s hymn of praise, acknowledges God as Creator and ruler of all kingdoms which have been established on earth. It reminds us of God’s redemption plan, of God’s Covenant through his Word and His Son, and leads us to say “Now and forever your name be adored!”

Vs1

God of creation, all powerful, all wise,
Lord of the universe rich with surprise,
Maker, Sustainer, and Ruler of all,
we are your children you hear when we call.

Vs2

God of the ages, through time’s trouble years
you are the One in whom history coheres;
Nations and empires your purpose fulfill,
moving in freedom, yet working your will.

Vs3

God of redemption, who wrought our rebirth,
called out your Church from the ends of the earth,
Still you are Savior put darkness to flight;
overcome sin by salvation’s pure light!

Vs4

God of your people, your Word still stands fast,
do for us now as you’ve done in the past!
Yours is the Kingdom your triumph we claim,
challenging evil in Jesus’ strong name.

Vs5

God of our now, all our trust is in you,
Covenant God, ever faithful and true;
Sovereign Creator, Redeemer and Lord,
now and forever your name be adored!

Confession and Pardon: While we praise God and seek his kingdom, sometimes we live more as citizens of our own land and lose sight of God’s plan. Use this time, guided by these words to allow the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts towards God.

Leader: God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we are your covenant people---one church drawn from all nations. Our citizenship is in heaven.

People: Yet we confess that we sometimes lose sight of your kingdom and its ways. We confess that we sometimes live more as citizens of our own land than as citizens of your kingdom.

Leader: By your truth you call all peoples to account. Forgive us for losing our distinctiveness.

People: Focus us on the cross and on the salvation you give through him who is the Lord and King and Judge of us all, Jesus Christ, in whose name we now confess our sins.

No matter what sin has occurred, God welcomes you to return to Him through the grace of Jesus Christ. Feel his grace and love as you confess, and release your sin to Him, and joyfully receive his forgiveness.

Leader: Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

People: In Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Scripture/Sermon: Take time before Sunday to read Mark 12:28-34. Here is the key to the diagnosis of your true spiritual condition. God's first commandment. Nothing brings one face-to-face with one's true heart-condition as these words: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Pray this: Help me, Lord to love you with all that is within me. And then, out of my love for you, help me to love others too. God's kingdom is based on this!

See you in worship this Sunday!