

BREAKING BARRIERS TO INTIMACY WITH GOD:
Overcoming Control
A Study of Matthew 6:10

Characteristic of Completeness: Prayer

Big Idea: Pray king-size prayers.

Related Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-5; Ezekiel 28:12-17; Matthew 4:1; 12:28; Luke 17:21; John 5:30; 18:33-36; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:13

Introduction:

1. I've been learning lately that my prayers are too small. My prayers are under-sized. I pray with a perspective that is too narrow. I pray pint-size prayers.

And maybe I do because I like to be in control. Maybe I do because I want to be self-sufficient and independent and in charge and the smaller prayers somehow seem safer and more manageable.

But my pint-size prayers usually see pint-size results.

Jesus has been calling me to pray king-size prayers, particularly as I have been preparing for this sermon. In fact, that's the ► big idea of my sermon this morning: Pray king-size prayers. Don't be limited to the small stuff. Pray king-size prayers.

I realize this big idea probably doesn't mean much to you now, so I'm going to try to explain it.

2. We've been studying our way through Matthew, Chapter 6. It's where Jesus teaches his followers how to pray. So we're talking about ► prayer this morning; prayer is our general topic.

Jesus shows us how to pray by giving us an example. The example is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. Today we come to ► Matthew 6:10. That's the text we're going to be studying this morning. It's where Jesus ► prays to His Father:

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:10 "Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven."

I'm going to unpack this Verse in two parts corresponding to the two parts of the Verse: First, ► "your kingdom come," and then ► second, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

- I. First ► things first. What does "Your kingdom come" mean? Let's consider the concept of ► kingdom as it is used in the Bible.

- A. It is useful to think of kingdom as having ► three aspects:
1. First, there is ► the ruler, the one who is in authority, the one who has the right to rule.
 2. Then there are ► the ruled, the ones who are under authority, the subjects.
 3. And then, there is ► the rule, which characterizes the exercise of rule by the ruler and the consequent submission of those ruled.

These three aspects—the ruler, the ruled, and the rule—are included in the term, “kingdom.”

- B. Of course, ► “*Your kingdom*” refers to the kingdom over which God our Father is ruler.
- C. And to say, “*Your kingdom ► come*” is to ask God to make His reign prevail, to carry out His rule, to allow His authority to triumph over everything in opposition to Him.
- D. An ► understanding of God’s kingdom is very important because God’s kingdom in general and His right to rule in particular is a very big deal to Him. We know it’s a big deal because our Father’s kingdom is a theme woven throughout Scripture. Let me try to give you a very broad-brush sketch of God’s kingdom program traced throughout history as recorded in the Bible. This is going to take a few minutes, but it is important to get a broad perspective so we can know how to pray “*Your kingdom come*” with greater understanding and sincerity. Getting a broad perspective is a key to being able to pray king-size prayers.
1. First of all, God’s kingdom is reflected in Himself. Before God created anything, His kingdom existed. It existed in the persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though all three persons of the Godhead are equal in essence, their roles differ in a way that reflects God’s kingdom.
 - a. The ► Father is the ruler. He is the one in authority. He has the right to rule.
 - b. Jesus, ► the Son, is the one who is ruled by His Father. Repeatedly, Jesus speaks of His personal submission to the Father.

For example, in ► John 5:30, Jesus says,

^{NKJ} John 5:30 “. . . I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”

- c. Finally, ► the Holy Spirit is the rule. He is the person through whom the Father's authority is exercised.

For example, just after Jesus was baptized, it was the Father's will that He go into the wilderness. Notice in ► Matthew 4:1 that the Holy Spirit is the agent through whom the Father exercises His authority. It says,

^{NJ} Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness . . .

The Holy Spirit led the Son.¹ The Spirit is the rule. So, even before God created anything, His kingdom existed.

2. And in ► all that God created, God demonstrates His right to rule; He shows His kingdom program. Throughout history, problems have come when God's creatures deny His right to rule. Indeed, history is moving toward a day when God will settle once for all the issue of authority—this issue of who has the right to rule.

- a. It started with the angels. God created angels as spirit beings to carry out His will, to operate under His authority.

- (1) But one angel in particular denied God's right to rule. His name is Satan. God describes the fall of Satan in ► Ezekiel 28, beginning in Verse 12. He says to Satan,

^{NLT} Ezekiel 28:12 “. . . You were the perfection of wisdom and beauty. . . . 14 I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. . . . ► 15 You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you. 16 Your great wealth filled you with violence, and you sinned. . . . ► 17 Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. . . .”

Because God had given Satan great wisdom, great beauty, great might, and great wealth, Satan became prideful. He

¹ Similarly, when Jesus cast out a demon from a blind and mute man, some Pharisees concluded that He did so by some demonic authority. Jesus corrected them in Matthew 12:28, saying, “But if [the “if” here conveys a statement of fact that could be translated, “since.” Since . . .] I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Notice that Jesus casts out demons by means of the Spirit. The Spirit represents the exercise of God's authority. And, when Jesus says, “the kingdom of God has come upon you,” He is confirming that the kingdom of God is reflected in Himself, the kingdom is shown in the very person of God. And, God has the right to rule.

began to deny God's right to rule over him and took for himself the position of ruler that rightfully belongs to God. In effect, he said, "I'll be the captain of my own ship. I'll decide for myself what I do and don't do. I'm not going to let God run me around on a stick. I'll be my own god. I'm the king of me."

- (2) When ► Satan fell, the Bible says he took one-third of the angels with him in rebellion against God's right to rule.² Together, they formed their own counterfeit kingdom in opposition to God's kingdom.

The rest of history reflects God's kingdom plan to settle once for all the issue of His right to rule. In fact, we live in a world where kingdoms are in conflict. It's the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of darkness. It is our Father in heaven versus the father of lies.

b. How did we humans get involved?

- (1) Well, after God created angels, He created the first humans, ► Adam and Eve. God affirmed His right to rule, saying to Adam and Eve, "You can eat and enjoy anything you want from this garden I've given you, except you are not to eat from this one tree."
- (2) Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Adam and Eve to deny God's right to rule. The temptation is recorded in ► Genesis 3, beginning in Verse 1:

^{NKJ} Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" ► 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ► 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

² Revelation 12:4.

In essence, Satan was inviting Eve and Adam to deny God's right to rule and to become their own gods, their own kings.

- (a) That's what Satan means by, ► "you will be like God." "You can call the shots. You can be your own god."
- (b) That's what Satan means by, ► "knowing good and evil." This phrase does not refer to knowing right from wrong. It is a Hebrew idiom that speaks of having the authority to decide for oneself what is right and what is wrong, quite apart from a higher authority.
- (3) Well, ► you probably know the story. Adam and Eve chose to deny God's right to rule. And they fell. And we all fell into their sin. Indeed, sin can generally be characterized as our denial of God's right to rule.

Going our own way. Doing our own thing. Defiantly resisting authority. Stubborn disobedience. Willful rebellion. Defensive and antagonistic attitudes. A self-centered focus. An obsession with empowerment and entitlement. A compulsively competitive nature. An addiction to control. Call it what you will, sin is a denial of God's right to rule. It's a kingdom issue. By our own sin, we have forsaken our own citizenship in God's kingdom, and we have aligned ourselves with the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness.

- c. But, God's kingdom plan has not been thwarted. Our gracious, loving Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ to provide a way for us to enter the kingdom of God in heaven in spite of our rebellion.
 - (1) Jesus spoke a good deal about the kingdom of God while He was on earth. By and large, people didn't get it. Many were willing to make Jesus their King as long as He did what they wanted a king to do. In fact, when Jesus entered Jerusalem the Sunday before His crucifixion, He was hailed as King.³

But Jesus didn't do what the people wanted Him to do. He didn't become their political king. He didn't overthrow the

³ According to John 12:13, the people said, "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"

government that oppressed them. He didn't save them from all their earthly troubles. He didn't match their expectations of how a king ought to get things done.

- (2) So, the following Friday, Jesus was delivered up to Pontius Pilate on charges of treason punishable by death. What a great irony. God in the person of Jesus came offering citizenship in His kingdom, where believers could submit to God's right to rule and pledge their allegiance to Him. And, the very ones who treasonously rejected His right to rule accused *Him* of treason.⁴

- (3) Jesus was crucified that day. What kind of King is this? What kind of King would allow Himself to be overthrown like that?

It's a King still determined to carry out His Kingdom plan. It's a King bound to claim His right to rule.

You see He died on a Friday. But, to Satan's horror and defeat, Jesus rose again on Sunday for us. By His death, He paid the price of our rebellion. By His resurrection, He declares victory over the kingdom of darkness. In doing so, Jesus allows our admission into the kingdom of heaven, where God is our ruler, where we are His citizens, and where His rule is characterized by His loving authority and our grateful submission.

Satan is determined to prevent people from entering the kingdom of God, but Jesus victoriously clears the way by His own sacrifice. Colossians ► 1:13 explains,

^{NKJ} Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love

- (4) Our ticket for entry into the kingdom of God in heaven is paid for by Christ, but we must receive it by faith. When we believe in Jesus as our only hope of entering the kingdom of God, we're in. And, we can say as Paul said in ► Philippians 3:20,

⁴ Pilate interrogates Jesus in John 18:33: "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answers in Verse 36: "My kingdom is not of this world. . . ." After the interrogation, Pilate asks the Jews about Jesus, in John 19:15, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Well said. They had no king but Caesar. They denied God's right to rule.

^{NKJ} Philippians 3:20 . . . our citizenship is in heaven,
from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the
Lord Jesus Christ

- d. You see, Jesus not only rose again, Jesus is also coming back. He's coming back to settle the whole kingdom issue. He's coming back to straighten out once for all who has the right to rule. The Bible describes the culmination of all things.⁵
- (1) If you are a believer in Jesus, in the end, God will be your all in all in heaven. He'll be your King forever.
 - (2) If you never believe, you will not enter the kingdom of God in heaven. And you will get to be your own god. That's what hell is—the place where you get to be your own god. This is the logical culmination of God's kingdom program, and it's perfectly reasonable. Everyone who faithlessly denies God's right to rule, will get to be his or her own god forever.

Sounds good at first—good until you realize that you'll be in a place where there is absolutely no restraint of evil, no conscience, no godly influence, no goodness to save you, just a cancerous, gnawing selfishness with nothing to keep it in check.

So ► there you have a broad overview of the kingdom of God in the Bible. God is steadily building His kingdom, adding and growing citizens, until the day when the issue of His right to rule will be settled once for all. That's what our heavenly Father is up to. So when we pray, "Your kingdom come," we're saying, "Bring it on," "May Your reign prevail," "Carry out Your rule," "May Your authority triumph over everything in opposition to You because You have the right to rule."

- II. That leads us right into the second part of ► Verse 10 which will take a lot less time to develop. It's where Jesus prays:

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:10 “. . . Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.”

- A. All by itself, ► “Your will be done” sounds pretty general, like “whatever Your will is, Lord—and who knows what that is?—I hope it happens.” But in the context of “Your

⁵ It's what happens after everything else. It's the ultimate establishment of God's kingdom in heaven. First Corinthians 15:24-28 says, “24 Then *comes* the end, when He [Jesus] delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. 27 For “He has put all things under His feet.” . . . 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

kingdom come,” we now have some sense of what God is up to and what He wants. It’s about His kingdom business, His kingdom will.⁶ Let’s think about just a few of the things that would include.

His kingdom will would certainly include more and more people entering His kingdom, becoming citizens of heaven by faith alone in Christ alone.

And His kingdom will would certainly include more and more of His citizens surrendering to His loving rulership in their lives.

And it would certainly include overcoming the kingdom of darkness—the devil and his emissaries who are out to do everything they can to thwart entrance and growth in the kingdom of God.

This gives us ► several key ingredients for king-size prayers. One ► is getting in: praying for unbelievers to enter into the kingdom of God by faith in Christ. Two ► is growing up: praying for believers already in the kingdom to grow up in trusting and submitting to God’s authority in their lives. God’s kingdom program boils down to getting in and growing up.

And we could add a ► third thing: guarding against. It’s praying for protection against Satan who is out to undermine God’s kingdom authority at every turn. Satan’s counterfeit kingdom program is to keep people from getting in and growing up.

And so, king-size prayers are those that focus on God’s kingdom purposes: getting in, growing up, and guarding against.

- B. This is where I realized that my prayers are too small. My tendency is to pray to get a handle on things. My prayers often reflect a desire to control, as if I’m king.

Let me give you an example. My wife is at the top of my personal prayer list. That’s certainly not a bad thing. Recently, Cathy broke her foot. Cathy is the hub of our family, so when she is immobilized, the family is immobilized. So, I’ve been praying

⁶ In the last part of Verse 10, Jesus adds a qualification to the doing of the Father’s will. He prays for the Father’s will to be done “. . . On earth as is it in heaven.” The comparison is between earth and heaven, and the request is that the doing of God’s will on earth would be just like the doing of His will in heaven. Heaven is the model. Which raises the question, how is God’s will done in heaven? For a number of reasons, I’m inclined to think that this does not mean that God’s will is all finished in heaven, but not yet finished on earth. Rather, I suspect Jesus is praying for the Father’s will to be carried out on earth just like it’s carried out in heaven.

In heaven, God Himself is the perfect model of how His kingdom authority is to be exercised. Remember, we’ve already touched on this. God’s kingdom is reflected in the Trinity. The Father is the ruler. He is the one in authority. He has the right to rule. Jesus, the Son, is the one who is ruled by His Father. He submits. And the Holy Spirit is the rule. He is the person He is the person through whom the Father’s authority is exercised. That’s how it works in heaven.

On earth, we are the ones ruled. As such, Jesus is our ultimate model for how God’s kingdom plan is to be carried out. Jesus came from heaven to earth to model for us what submission looks like.

for Cathy to get better, that she would be strengthened, so that she can get back on track and our family can get back on track and we can get a better handle on things.

There is certainly nothing wrong with praying for the well-being of another. But I confess, some of it is related to my own control. I've searched my heart, and I think there's a part of me that's praying, "Lord, please restore order to my little kingdom." Oh, I don't voice those words because I know they don't sound good, but that's what's sneaking around in my heart. Sometimes it leaks out in the form of a low-grade crankiness; I can get cranky when there is no order in my little kingdom.

And I wonder: How many of my prayers, no matter how high-sounding they might be—how many really come under the category of "Lord, please restore order to my little kingdom." These are pitifully small prayers.

And wouldn't such small prayers be the exact opposite of praying, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done"? I think so. The opposite of praying "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" would be to think, "Lord, please bring order to my little kingdom."

Well how could I king-size my prayers for Cathy's situation? It occurs to me that I could king-size my prayers by mixing in some of the king-size ingredients I mentioned earlier. I could still pray that her foot would get better. But I could king-size it by also praying that the whole situation would advance God's kingdom purposes, including getting in, growing up, and guarding against. How in the world could a broken foot relate to these things? I don't know for sure, but I could pray for the possibilities.

When a foot is broken, there are some relational opportunities. You see people you don't normally see, like doctors. You engage in conversations you don't normally have, like "What happened?" You make connections you don't normally make, like "I broke my foot once, too." And people see how the whole family reacts when life is not tidy. All these things and more could be relational opportunities for someone to come closer to believing in Jesus, closer to getting into the kingdom of God. With that in mind, I could pray, "Your kingdom come; Your will be done; may someone come closer to entering Your kingdom through this."

And when a foot is broken, there are opportunities to grow up. Is there a lesson for me to learn about submission to the loving authority of my heavenly Father? Is this revealing a my-little-kingdom mindset? With that in mind, I could pray, "Your kingdom come; Your will be done; help us to see how you want us to grow up; teach us to be better citizens of your kingdom through this."

And when a foot is broken, there is an opportunity for Satan to discourage and distract. He whispers, "See, God is not so good after all. You can't really trust Him. Look where trust got you." With that in mind, I can guard against the enemy by praying, "Your kingdom come; Your will be done; please protect us from the lies of

Satan.” That’s how I could king-size my prayers. Making sure I’m about what God is about: getting in and growing up.

- C. A bone doesn’t need to break in order to pray king-size prayers. But maybe a heart does. If you are a follower of Christ this morning, I have a friendly challenge for you. Imagine ► a ledger with two columns side by side. At the top of one column is ► the heading: “For God’s Kingdom.” At the top of the other column is ► the heading, “For My Little Kingdom.” Now take a quick inventory of all your thoughts and all your prayers over the last week or so. What’s your motivation behind them? Where would they go on the ledger? Under “God’s Kingdom?” Or under “My Little Kingdom?” Which side would have more? And what does that tell you?
- D. I ► posed a question a few weeks ago, “Why aren’t we growing more at Moon Valley?” Maybe it’s because our prayers are too small. Maybe we need to pray king-size prayers.

In my recent reading, I was encouraged by a church like ours that decided to pray king-size prayers.⁷ I’m usually hesitant to compare churches for the same reason I’m hesitant to compare children. They’re different. But this one got my attention. The church existed for about ten years—just like us—and had fewer than 1,000 people attending—just like us. And they had small groups—just like us.

But they decided to king-size their prayers. Each small group began to pray that God would allow them the kingdom privilege of bringing a new family to Christ every six months. It was a bold prayer. Each small-size group praying a king-size prayer.

Over the next eight years, they were able to enfold 4,000 new people into the church, 80% of whom had not known Christ or gone to church before.

For them, the small groups were the point of entry, and they didn’t use any in-your-face, hard-sell evangelistic approaches. They earned the right to be heard through developing friendships and meeting needs in their community. And as opportunities arose and the Spirit prompted, they graciously, respectfully shared the story of Jesus Christ in their own lives.

It doesn’t start with certain techniques or catchy promotions or special programs. It starts with praying king-size prayers.

^{NKJ} Matthew 6:9 “. . . Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

⁷ The church is New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, described by Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1993), 294-295.