

John 18:28-37 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. ²⁹ Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" ³⁰ They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you." ³¹ Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," ³² that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die. ³³ Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." ³⁷ Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

We pray every Sunday, "Thy Kingdom Come." We pray it, we pray it, and we pray it. But what truly are we asking for in these words? What is God's Kingdom and how does it come? Who better to ask than Jesus himself? Pilate as Jesus stood before him in the Praetorium asked Jesus if He was the king of the Jews. And Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here. You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

How does God's kingdom grow? Well, it does not grow by armies and swords like most kingdoms of Jesus' day. It does not grow through brute force and careful negotiation as many kingdoms of our day grow. It grows through the most unusual means, words, Jesus' words precisely. Yes, God's kingdom grows as His word is scattered throughout the earth. His kingdom comes as people hear His voice.

As we pray this petition, we truly are asking for three things. First, we ask that God's kingdom would continue to take root in our life. We pray that his kingdom would continue to come to us. It does this as we

gather for worship to hear His Word, as we gather for bible study to meditate upon that same Word, and as God connects His Word to water, bread, and wine in His kingdom-giving sacraments.

Secondly in this prayer, we pray that God's kingdom might come to others also. We pray that the kingdom might come to those who do not yet know the kingdom or its King. And how does this happen? It happens as you and I go out and scatter God's Word in our homes, at our jobs, and in our schools. Thankfully, God promises that His Word does not go out in vain. No every time you and I share the gospel with someone, that Word goes to work to accomplish that for which it was sent. God's kingdom also comes to others every time we drop money in the offering plate to support the missions of our district and synod. It happens as we give to faithful support to John Mehl. It happens as we bow our heads to pray for all mission work being done here and abroad.

Lastly, in this prayer we ask for God's kingdom to come to its fulfillment. The disciples often asked when they walked with Jesus, "Is it now Lord that you will establish your kingdom?" The martyrs in the book of Revelation cry out, "How long oh Lord." And we pray, "Amen, come Lord Jesus." Indeed, we ask in this prayer that our Lord would return, judge the living and the dead, and deliver us unto life everlasting.

Tonight, we are called to examine in our lives whether we have simply prayed these words, or meant them as well. Do we pray for God's kingdom to come to us, and then not take advantage of opportunities for reading and studying God's Word, the very means by which He comes to us? Have we prayed for God's kingdom to come to others, and yet not shared God's word with our friends, relatives, and peers? Have we prayed for Jesus to return and yet ordered our lives as if this world is all that matters to us?

Surely each of us in different ways and different times has prayed this prayer with our lips and yet not shown the desire for God's kingdom to come in our daily lives. It is evident in our lives at times that we are truly praying that God's kingdom would come as long as that doesn't require much of us. But God has chosen to grow his kingdom through us. And we rejoice for that opportunity.

Tonight we must fall before the king admitting that at times we have been unfaithful citizens of His kingdom. We admit that we have not advanced His kingdom as we should have. We come before our King knowing that the proper reaction to our ways is removal from the kingdom. But rather than banishing us from

His kingdom, our King welcomes us again into it. He removes His armor to show us the holes in His hands and feet to assure us that we can remain in His kingdom forever. He reveals His pierced side to remind us of the blood that flowed for our sins. And He breaths aloud before us fully alive to assure us that our sins will not mean eternal death, but rather that His resurrection for us means eternal life. Our King is more than gracious and extends His love and mercy to us again this day. And with His forgiveness penetrating our bodies and souls, we are made able to pray from our hearts, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come. Amen."