

Sunday, 16th May 2021 – online service sermon

“Thy Kingdom Come”

[What Is the Kingdom of God According to the Bible? \(learnreligions.com\)](https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-the-kingdom-of-god-according-to-the-bible/)

[Kingdom of God | Christianity | Britannica](https://www.britannica.com/topic/kingdom-of-god)

[2. The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament | Bible.org](https://www.bible.org/2-the-kingdom-of-god-in-the-old-testament)

[What is the Kingdom of God? Understanding the Important Meaning \(christianity.com\)](https://www.christianity.com/what-is-the-kingdom-of-god-understanding-the-important-meaning/)

Isaiah 2, 1 - 5

Matthew 11, 1 – 5 and 12 - 13

“Thy Kingdom come” is a global initiative started by the Church of England and the Methodist Church in 2016, in which **Christians are called to pray for the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost**. We are invited to pray for God’s Spirit to move within the church, equipping us to share God’s love with others and to pay attention to how God is speaking to us today. We are to use this time to pray specifically for people to come to know Jesus and turn in faith to Him. “Thy kingdom come” is now followed in 170 countries by more than 60 Christian denominations.

The phrase “Thy kingdom come” comes from the Lord’s prayer, where Jesus invites his followers to pray in a clear, precise and succinct manner. One of the petitions is for the kingdom of God to come. What does “kingdom of God” imply? It is certainly a very rich, heavily laden theological term and a lot can be said about it.

The idea of a “kingdom of God” originates in the Old Testament but the actual words first occur in the New Testament and are mentioned more than 80 times. It is another of those Christian paradoxes: already here and not yet come. The reading from Matthew 11 suggests that the kingdom of God has arrived, has become a reality when healing and restoration has taken place and the Gospel is preached. So, in places, on a small-scale, glimpses of the kingdom of God can be seen and it can be experienced as a reality.

The kingdom of God is present when peoples’ lives are substantially improved and changed for the better. This includes healing, both physically and mentally. Therefore, it is no surprise, that medicine has been a Christian tradition from almost the beginning of the faith. Christian hospitals in Europe and overseas have done a lot to alleviate the suffering of people by providing freely available healthcare. But this is only one aspect.

The kingdom of God also refers to social justice and fairness in society. The usual way of things is often that a minority rules over the majority. People with privilege, wealth, power and status lay down the rules and the majority have to follow. There are many examples of this kind of unjust society, it is already mentioned and criticised in the Old Testament by the prophets Amos and Isaiah. These two point out that society is corrupt, that people exploit the weak and vulnerable. In the Bible Project videos, the kingdom of God is described as God’s upside-down rule. We get to see it in the famous words of Mary in Luke 1: “He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.” During the 1970s and 1980s this was expressed by what has become known as Liberation Theology, a movement started in Latin America, that encouraged Christians to get involved directly in politics and challenge the unjust and corrupt regimes that existed in some of the countries there. Scholars

Sunday, 16th May 2021 – online service sermon

like Leonardo Boff and Ernesto Cardenal provided the theological framework for the initiative which was later picked up and applied by the CofE to the situation in 1980s Britain. The resulting report “Faith in the City” was branded as thinly veiled Marxism by some conservative politicians at the time – which is actually paying it a compliment. There has been a long tradition in Europe of Christians championing the poor and vulnerable by getting involved in trade unions and civil liberty movements, helping to challenge ruling elites.

In this way we can see glimpses of the kingdom of God already now, based on the teaching of Jesus: illnesses are healed, diseases eradicated and injustices are challenged and removed. In that way, in a tangible manner, we get a real taste of what one day will be established everywhere and forever. The kingdom of God also begins in the hearts and minds of the believers, people who commit themselves to Jesus and experience His love and forgiveness. There is a clear spiritual dimension to the kingdom of God. It is a place where all acknowledge God, give Him the right status and show faith. All who have faith in Jesus are already members of the kingdom of God but are eagerly looking forward to the time when all will be united in faith and everyone will worship Jesus.

It is obvious and natural that all who have encountered Jesus and experienced the forgiveness and peace He offers in this life and in the life to come want others to have the same experience. That’s why as part of the prayers for “Thy kingdom come” Christian believers are encouraged to pray for five individuals specifically that they will come to faith in Christ.

Of course, as believers we will take the appropriate opportunities to talk about the hope that is within us, but there comes a time when everything has been said that can be said in order to draw others in. That is when the conversation stops and continues in prayer. God does answer prayer and He does draw people to Him. Sometimes, years of prayer may need to pass until one day a person begins to believe. We need to be open minded as to how and when our prayers for others are answered. It would be wrong to expect that someone coming into a relationship with Jesus will express this in the same way as we do. When we pray for others to get to know Christ, we are not asking God to make them our spiritual clones. There are many different ways of being a Christian. Evangelical Christianity is not the only valid way. Each person will find their own faith, what matters in the end is that they are with Christ, whether that is in the same denomination as ourselves or in a completely different one; whether they become evangelicals or liberals, traditionalists or modernists. What matters is that they acknowledge God, turn to Jesus and leave their unbelief behind. Therefore, let us join in with thousands of others and pray over the coming days and beyond for five or more people by name that they may learn about Jesus and turn to Him in faith.