

**Christ Presbyterian Church
Edina, Minnesota
September 20 & 21, 2014
John Crosby
This Day: Be Surrendered
Matthew 6:10**

[Video shown. *To view, see link below*]

I identified with Maggie most when she was in the middle of a crazy, busy, totally normal day, trying to pray, trying to link what she was doing non-stop with a job she couldn't see she was somehow coming to believe in more and more. It sounded to me as though she was doing that prayer better because she had done that prayer before. I bet you've done it before, too. Let's pray together the way Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

How many of you have prayed that prayer before? That's okay. I used to think that repetition led to ruts, led to rote, but I've started to believe that done the right way, it reminds me that this prayer is not my idea in the first place. It is not something I made up. And when we commit something to memory, we also commit something to our hearts. It soaks in. Even though it seems to be a boring part of the church liturgy, we're supposed to say this prayer together, because when we join our voices with others, we're reminded that being a Christian is too tough to go alone, and we are learning even as we pray.

When the disciples asked Jesus about prayer, He didn't tell them to go off and sit quietly going *ommm* until something spiritual came to their minds. Jesus didn't ask, "Well, how do you feel about God? Let's talk about that." He said, "When you pray, pray this, 'Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name.'" By learning to pray the Lord's Prayer, we do not become better than others. We become Christian. We become followers of Jesus. Our prayer becomes a witness to what God has done with ordinary, broken, sinful folk like us. Every time the church gathers and we pray the Lord's Prayer and eat and drink the Lord's Supper with Jesus, we show that Jesus continues to be known by the *terrible* company He keeps at the table. Jesus doesn't invite the best and the brightest and all the saints of heaven. Instead He seems to choose people like you and me and then He teaches them to talk. Prayer, somebody said, bends our lives toward God, and habits are one of the ways that happens.

We come to what I think is the most dangerous, most revolutionary part of the prayer Jesus taught His followers when He said, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The reason it is dangerous is because Jesus is asking them to take a Pledge of Allegiance. They've done it all their lives but He says, "No, no, I want you to take a *new* Pledge of Allegiance."

I spent a couple of years in Washington, D.C. and was frequently asked to pray at public events. “Give us a little prayer to start us off.” Some of the great joys of my life were the times I was asked to pray at the Navy Chapel for a naturalization service. A naturalization service is when people from around the world come to the United States and study our laws to prepare to recite the Pledge of Allegiance for the first time as an American citizen. It is one of the most powerful things, I kid you not. If you ever have a chance to attend, go! At the last one I went to in D.C., I sat next to a senator who had been a senator longer than I had been alive, and he was in tears because of what happens at the end of the service. They ask people to rise and take their oath. It’s an old, almost ancient oath and it starts like this.

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same

Citizens from Cuba are saying it in broken English. Citizens from Iran are saying, “At last!” Citizens from Columbia and Ghana are saying, “This is the country I want to be part of!” They have to learn a new language because they have to say it in English. You can’t say the oath in another language. They have to learn the laws of our country. They know the laws of the Constitution and our government better than you do. They really do. They take a course that they have to pass as adults. Most of all, they come from places where they don’t trust in the government and they turn and say, “We will conform to new laws. We will honor a different king, a different country.”

When Jesus says, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” and teaches us to pray it, this is our Pledge of Allegiance. By the way, the Kingdom of heaven or the Kingdom of God is the most used phrase in the New Testament. Over and over people are drawn to the idea that we live in one place but are called to live in the Kingdom of God. That was the message of Jesus. It is called the Good News. It says, “Jesus went abroad, preaching the Good News. ‘The Time has come. The Kingdom is at hand. Repent and believe the Good News. Believe that there is Good News. There is another Kingdom. Join that Kingdom. Believe it and then repent.’” Repent, because when you join a new country with its open allegiance, you are renouncing the old country. We don’t often think of it that way. I can be a good American and a good Christian, which in once sense is true, but when you say the Pledge of Allegiance, you say, “This is the most important thing” and when you say the Lord’s Prayer, you say “*This* is my Kingdom above all others. *This* is my Kingdom.” And it is not tradition; it is priority.

Repent, and our old oath releases our desires to win by the rules of this kingdom here, so that I can show people the Kingdom of Jesus. If nothing else, when you pray “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” what you are saying is that God is not a genie in a bottle. We often open the prayer bottle and say, “God, help me out here,” but saying “Thy will be done” means God is *not* a genie in a bottle. Your wish is *not* His command. In fact, here it says “His command better be your wish” and so we pray “Thy Kingdom come.”

Kingdoms have boundaries. There are some who are citizens and there are others who are not. God’s Kingdom opposes the way the world sets up boundaries—gender, class, race, economics, accent. God’s Kingdom is open to all with no care for the borders of the world. Our boundary is where God’s will is done. The only boundary that matters is where we say, “Thy will

be done.” That is what a Kingdom literally is. The Kingdom is where the rule of the King is being done. “Thy will be done.” Remember when Jesus gets tempted? The devil takes Jesus up to the top of the mountain and says, “All the kingdoms of the world can be Yours.” Satan is able to offer “all the kingdoms of the world” since they belong to him, but Jesus is there to start a new one.

The followers of Jesus were longing for God to come and become King. They were fed up with the other kings. The Roman emperors were brutal oppressors. King Herod’s dynasty was a joke. It was time for the true God, the real King, to step into history, to take the power and the glory, to claim the Kingdom for His own. Whenever we pray “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we are saying something. We are not people who are just here as good little Americans until we die and then we become good little Christians in heaven. “In earth as it is in heaven.” Choose!

The problem was that the disciples didn’t understand the kind of Kingdom Jesus wanted to set up. A lot of us don’t either. For over 2,000 years, people have had different ideas about what the Kingdom of heaven is. They fall into three rough camps. Let me pull Presbyterian on you for just a second and lecture. In most of history in most places, when somebody talks about the Kingdom of God, they are talking about the end of the world, the apocalypse, when the Kingdom of heaven will come and shatter the world. That is the most common and most ignored understanding in our day. Most of us really want Jesus to come back—at a convenient time for us.

The second idea about the Kingdom of heaven is that it is the Kingdom of the heart. Remember, Jesus said, “The Kingdom is inside you. The Kingdom is within.” For many people that means when we hear the Word of God preached and known and believed, we start the Kingdom because it is internal. It is *in* us. Whenever a couple of us are gathered together, there is the Kingdom but it’s not a *real* Kingdom.

The third idea of the Kingdom of God is when it says, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” Jesus was not kidding. The kingdom of the Evil One will be displaced. The Kingdom will come down from heaven to earth. God’s space and ours finally will be integrated in time and space and history. Where is the Kingdom of God for you? Dallas Willard says,

We are thinking here of the places we spend our lives: of homes, playgrounds, city streets, workplaces, schools, and so forth. These are the places we have in mind, and they are where we are asking for the kingdom, God’s rule, to come and be in effect. We know our weaknesses, our limitations, our habits, and we know how tiny our power of conscious choice is. We are therefore asking that, by means beyond our knowledge and the scope of our will, we will be assisted to act within the flow of God’s actions.

A lot of times, the idea that God’s Kingdom will come would be very uncomfortable for me. I would turn from a winner into a loser. I would turn from somebody on the inside to somebody on the outside. I would turn from one of the good guys in our society to one of the people about whom Jesus says, “And *you*, what are *you* doing today?” Where is the Kingdom?

Last night I looked over here and saw a gentleman who is trying to make a restaurant business go. Tough job. When he invites people into his place of business, he is trying to establish a new

Kingdom. "I've got to tell you, if people will come for dinner and they don't have the right meal, they don't act the right way." How does he make the Kingdom happen? And over here and over there are two flight attendants and if you think people are not at their best, put them in a little box of metal and throw them six miles up in the air. They don't act like the Kingdom of heaven. They are supposed to be bringing the Kingdom to that place.

How does the Kingdom come? How does the Kingdom get here? I think Jesus tells us that it starts with a prayer. Pray like this, "Thy Kingdom come" because when we pray "Thy Kingdom come," first you recognize that there is a Kingdom and second, every time you do that in a fresh way, you pledge allegiance. We did not teach our kids in kindergarten and first and second grade to say the Pledge of Allegiance and never say it again. It is something they renew. When we say "Thy Kingdom come," do you know what we are doing? We are pledging allegiance through prayer. It is the same thing we do in better words.

I love Christmas carols. I wish we could sing Christmas carols all year. One of my favorites is *Joy to the World*.

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;

Because when earth receives her King

Let every heart prepare Him room,

That's how the Kingdom grows

And heaven and nature sing

We are placing our bet, declaring loyalty, singing a different song. That's how the Kingdom grows and what happens when the Kingdom grows is that heaven and nature sings. Joy to the world! When we say, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done," we are placing our bets. We are declaring our new loyalty. It's not about my insurance business any more. It's not about my retirement anymore. It's not about my kids anymore. It's about serving the King, singing a different song. So if I want to know how the Kingdom comes, I look to it and I pledge allegiance to it. Then the Kingdom starts to come because when people recognize it and pledge allegiance to it, together they form a colony of the Kingdom. They are citizens of the Kingdom living differently than before.

That's how the apostle Paul describes that little house church in Greece, in Philippi. He says, "You are a colony of heaven, a little gathering of the citizens of heaven in Greece." We are a colony of heaven in Edina, people who are saying, "We are citizens of the King" and when we gather together, we start to act differently than the world around us because we are citizens of heaven. The apostle Paul nails it when he tells the Romans, "The Kingdom of God is right living, and it is peace, and it is joy in the Spirit." Is that what you are experiencing together? The Kingdom of heaven is right living and peace and joy in the Spirit. It is not just the salvation of souls, it is life that starts now! I have to tell you, I do not always understand this. But I understand that somehow, God is saying that if I am acting as if I am part of the team of heaven here, then God is at work in me and around me.

How many of you saw *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*? It was more popular than Genesis, chapters 40 to 50. It told the story of Joseph, who wanted to follow the one God, who wanted to be a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven. His brothers thought he was an arrogant jerk and they sold him as a slave. He goes into Egypt, gets thrown into prison, and by an incredibly circuitous route ends up as the right hand of the Pharaoh. As the right hand of the Pharaoh, he watches as his brothers walk in through palace doors needing help. They don't even recognize him and he saves them and all their descendants.

At the end of the story Joseph is able to look back on all the twists and turns of plot and proclaim, "Fear not! You meant it for evil—God meant it for good." We are not talking about the silly notion that everything that happens, everything you do, occurs because God planned it that way. We are talking about the amazing resilience of God. God's intent for the world isn't stumped by our plans. God's will *will* be done on earth as it is in heaven. It means that in every bad thing, every good thing, every confusing thing, God is at work. Those of us who belong to the colony of heaven keep acting differently from the rest of the world because we believe that God is at work no matter how it looks, because God is the one who says to the world, "You meant it for evil, but I meant it for good."

Martin Luther once said, "God can shoot with a warped bow and ride the lame horse and hit the target every time." You and I are not supposed to be sitting here going "That's not God's will; that's the devil's will." We're supposed to be faithful children, confident that God, somehow, sometime, means it for good. "Thy Kingdom come." That's hope. His Kingdom is coming. Everything is going to be good. That's hope.

Then Jesus says, "Thy will be done." That calls for patience. I'm much better at hope than I am at patience, but it's not working out perfectly, is it? His Kingdom is supposed to be coming, but that's hope and I wait with impatience because I look around and see a world that seems to be going to hell. How come it's not working out? Tom Wright said it doesn't look right because

Jesus is the medical genius who discovered penicillin; we are doctors, ourselves being cured by the medicine, now applying it to those who need it. Jesus is the musical genius who wrote the greatest oratorio of all time; we are the musicians, captivated by his composition ourselves, who now perform it before a world full of muzak and cacophony.

It is already here but it is not yet what it will be. What will that Kingdom look like? If it were to be the whole world, if joy came to the whole world, what might it look like? John Ortberg tried to describe it one time. I asked a couple of friends of mine, Joe and Jennie, if they would share with you what Ortberg said the Kingdom of God might look like if it was from sea to shining sea.

[Jennie:] The Kingdom of God will change everything. In that economy, there are no human needs. Economics will no longer be a grade of science.

[Joe:] It would be like saying, "In the terms of heaven, every day the stock market, if it still existed, would go up and to the right. The bull will live on Wall Street forever. The bear will visit no more. The Fed will never have to raise interest rates again. Little children in the Sudan will feast and have carpeted bedrooms and private baths.

[Jennie:] In the day when God's Kingdom really does come, never again will anyone hunger. Never again will they thirst. Think what that would look like.

[Joe:] No more pictures of little children with swollen bellies. No long lines in Haiti. No mothers trying to scrounge enough food so their babies will be able to survive another day.

[Jennie:] The jobless rate all over the world will go down to zero and stay there. And everybody will love what they do. That's the Kingdom of God!

[Joe:] For us, politics is mostly the story of human conflict but in the Kingdom of God, Isaiah says that God will judge between the nations. God will settle all disputes.

[Jennie:] God will be there and they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and there will be no more war, no more fighting, no more hatred, no more illegal aliens. There won't be boundaries. No more suicide bombers and the lion will lie down with the lamb and in that day, the dog will make peace with the rabbit.

[Joe:] And in the Kingdom of God, everything will be beautiful. The Book of Revelation says that the streets of the city of God's Kingdom are paved with pure gold and that when you come into that city, there is a huge pearl. You walk right through this huge, perfectly carved pearl.

[Jennie:] It's the Kingdom where human hunger for beauty is finally satisfied. No more pollution, not more ghettos, no more barrios.

[Joe:] In that Kingdom, the pictures that little children draw that you and I stick up on our refrigerators will look like Rembrandts and Van Goghs and Vermeers. There will be beauty and we will know beauty.

[Jennie:] In that city, beauty will come to teenage girls. Teenage girls in that city will look at magazine covers and then they will look in the mirror and they will think to themselves, "I look just like . . ." because there they will celebrate the beauty that God sees in them when He looks at all His children, whatever their shape or size or color. Children will look in the mirror and say, "I am good."

[Joe:] In that Kingdom, the perfect will of God will become our daily reality and it will be life, life to the full.

[Jennie and Joe together:] May God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen! Amen! I've heard that four or five times now and every time, I'm going, yes! That's what I'm talking about. That's what I hunger for. How does it come? It starts when people pledge their allegiance. They say, "Yes, God. I want that to happen here and now in small ways and big.

We are trying to make it so that our seeing God this day through prayer is something that takes us through the week, and we're trying to offer you a reminder of that each week. There's a coaster we have at the end of the pews. This one's green for week No. 2, and has this phrase on it. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And like last week, we say, take this coaster home. Put it in your bathroom, your bedroom, your kitchen, on your

refrigerator so that when you pass it, it will help you to pray. On the back it offers the idea of surrendering your old citizenship and becoming a child of the King. Make it come to life. You see, if it was part of Jesus' task to teach His followers to *pray this way*, part of our task is to teach the world to pray *that way*.

How does it happen? In Luke's Gospel Jesus waits until His followers ask Him how they should pray. And the reason that they asked Jesus was because they saw what He was doing. They asked Jesus how He prayed because they saw how He was living. There was a lesson there.

Lord Jesus, I ask You to come to these people in this place, these sisters and brothers, that we might together hail You as the King, that we might come, and with You start a colony of heaven that really encourages prayer and that will bless the earth. We will pledge our hearts and souls, our minds and our strength, to loving You and following in Your Name. Amen.

Link to video shown during this service: <http://vimeo.com/106815747>
(THIS DAY: BE SURRENDERED)

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.