

Sunday of the Prodigal Son – “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
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Gospel Reading: Matthew 15:1-32*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As I always preach, the purpose of Lent is to learn. It is an opportunity to learn about our faith, how to grow closer to God and how we can become better Christians. Continuing with that tradition, this year’s Lenten Sermon Series is about the *Lord’s Prayer*. Last week we learned how God is our father. When we realize that God is our father, our view of God, the world, each other, and even ourselves changes. We also learned how His power is backed by love and His love is backed by power and also that not only is His name holy, but so too is His character and nature.

“Thy kingdom come...”

Today we are going to learn about His kingdom. Throughout the New Testament we hear about the Kingdom. In fact, in the New Testament, the Kingdom is mentioned 139 times and Christ preaches about the Kingdom 105 times. So it is clear that it is a very important concept we must understand. The very first mention of the Kingdom is found in the Gospel of Mark when Christ exclaims, “The time has come and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the good news!” (1:15).

However, sometimes understanding the kingdom can be confusing because Jesus spoke about it in three different ways. He spoke of it in the past, when said that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, were in the kingdom (Luke 13:28; Matthew 8:11), leading us to believe it was back in history. He spoke about it in the present, for He said, “For the Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), making it a reality now. And yet He spoke of it in the future, teaching us to pray for it to come, just as we do in the *Lord’s Prayer*.

So how can the Kingdom of God be in the past, present and future all at one time? The answer is found in the next request, “Thy will be done”.

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“Thy will be done...”

The ancient Jews had a special way of speaking and writing called parallelism, where they would say everything twice. They would say one thing and then say it in another way, explaining and confirming what was originally said. We see this throughout the Psalms and this is what Jesus was doing in the *Lord’s Prayer*. He is saying the Kingdom of God is a society on earth where God’s will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. This is how the Kingdom can be past, present and future all at the same time.

“...on earth as it is in heaven.”

Therefore, whoever has done God’s will and who ever does God’s will are in the kingdom, and because this world is very far from being a place of God’s perfect will, the consummation of the Kingdom is still in the future and is something we pray for. Thus, to be in the Kingdom of God is to obey His will. It is not a nation, race or country, but something very personal. Being a citizen of this Kingdom demands our will, heart and life submit to His will.

It sounds simple enough, but how do we know God’s will? There was once a hiker who appeared before God Almighty in the next life. Taking advantage of the moment, he asked God, “Why didn’t you save me when I was on the cliff and it collapsed beneath me, causing me to fall into the canyon?”

God answered, “When you passed through the thick forest, I sent an angel to protect you from the bear that was about to attack you. When the bear saw the angel, he lowered his head and walked away. When you swam through the river, I sent my angel to protect you from the poisonous snakes. When they saw him, they left you alone. When you were at the edge of the cliff, I sent my angel to stop you from walking any closer, but you, full of your own desires, pushed the angel off to the side and walked forward. Today, I wanted to save you three times, but on the third time, you chose your own desires and not My will.”

God’s will is always for our safety and benefit, but because of our desires, we are blinded and do not see what He wants for us. How often do we pray, “I want” when we should be praying, “What do You want?” We must pray that God open our eyes, so we see His way; that He open our ears, so we hear His commandments; and that He open our hearts and minds, so we truly know who He is.

When we do God’s will, His Kingdom becomes a reality, that is, it is heaven on earth. Yet, when men follow their own wills, filled with greed, hatred and pride, it becomes hell on

earth. And unfortunately this is what is happening in all corners of the world. If we want this situation to change, we need to change it, beginning with us.

There was once a Christian who prayed, “Lord, revive Your Church, beginning with me” and we can say, “Lord, bring Your Kingdom, beginning with me.” And we Armenians, who were the first Christian nation, need to pray and call out to the Lord, “Lord, start with us! Let Your Church’s renaissance, awakening and resurrection begin with us!

Let us, especially during this Lenten season, pray for God’s will, and when we know what it is, let us also pray for the strength and courage to follow and fulfill it. For in doing so, we establish the Kingdom of God on earth, preaching it to others and living it for ourselves.

Amen.