**Thy Kingdom Come 21 – 31 – May 2020** **7th Sunday after Easter**

[[Acts 1:6-14](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=46#hebrew_reading)  •  [Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=46#psalm_reading)  •  [1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=46#epistle_reading)  •  [John 17:1-11](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=46#gospel_reading)]

We are now in the week of ‘*Thy Kingdom Come’*. What started in 2016 as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Church of England, has grown into an international, and ecumenical, call to prayer across 85 countries, using the Lord’s Prayer to pray specifically

for five people we know, that at least one might become a follower of Jesus, accept his kingship over their life and enter his kingdom. The Kingdom of God (*Kingdom of heaven)* is open to everyone. There are no limits on numbers, unlike here, where, as I write, we are restricted to meeting in twos and in open spaces.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he gave them, what we call, ‘The Lord’s Prayer’. The third line says “Thy (*Your*) Kingdom come”. But what does this mean? **First of all, a kingdom has to have a king.**

The vision of the Hebrew prophets was that this king – the anointed one –would come and restore, not just the kingdom of King David, but the kingdom where God himself was king and everything would be set right. (*The term, ‘anointed one’, translates as ’Messiah’ in Hebrew and ’Christ’ in Greek.)* Many expected a sword-wielding, conquering hero; but for Isaiah, the coming king would not be a powerful warrior, but a humble and gentle servant who would bring justice to the nations at the cost of his own suffering and death. He would bring life to the bruised and broken and set the prisoners free. As Isaiah 42 verse 1 says:

*‘Here is my servant, whom I uphold,*

*my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;*

*he will bring forth justice to the nations*.’

As Christians, we believe that these words are fulfilled in Christ Jesus. As we pray them, we are committing to bringing in his kingdom, which is the way of justice, peace, joy and love. The king is gentle, good and meek, but righteous and all-powerful at the same time. His kingdom will have these qualities too. By his ministry, death and resurrection, Jesus proclaimed the beginning of a new age: the Kingdom of God. That age has begun but is not yet complete. We live in the imperfect in-between times. We have no difficulty recognising imperfections. There is much that is wrong in the world, but these past few months have shown that there is still kindness and compassion offered by a great many people to those who, for whatever reason, are in most need. So when we pray, ‘Your kingdom come’, we remember the times in which we live. We lift the suffering of the world to God and we long, with God, for the world to be set right.

When Jesus referred to the Kingdom, he was explaining it to people who expected a physical kingdom with a king and boundaries so, at times, he suggested a place, ‘he said to him, “*You are not far from the kingdom of God*.” *(Mark 12:34), ‘* *he sent (the disciples) out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal’,* (*Luke 9:2*), and ‘(*Jesus) spoke to (the crowds) about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured’.* *(Luke 9:11*)

At other times Jesus suggested a spiritual place here and now; “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;*” *(Mark 1:15)* and “ *in fact, the kingdom of God is among you*.” *(*[*Luke 17:21*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+17:21&version=NRSV)). It is possible that the word used, from the original Aramaic, was the word for kingship rather than kingdom **,** meaning that we should submit ourselves to God and his ways rather than go our own way or even, without investigation, the ways others might try to impose on us.

Who can enter the kingdom? It is home for everyone who believes that Jesus is the promised Christ. This belief comes through faith, not by passing exams. Jesus said, “*Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”* *(*[*Mark 10:14*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10:14&version=NRSV)*-15)*

We are not called to be childish, but, in the best way possible, to be childlike; to trust our heavenly Father completely, to be obedient to him, to be excited to be with him. It is a great joy when a child falls asleep on your lap because they know they are safe and loved. We can feel safe and loved with God because of Jesus. We just need to believe in him, who he is and what he did for us.

How do we enter the kingdom? Jesus told Nicodemus, “*Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. (*[*John 3:5*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3:5&version=NRSV)*)*

Believe, be baptised, and receive the Holy Spirit; it’s so simple that a child can understand it. There is no need to over-complicate our response.

In the Lord’s Prayer we pray for the Kingdom of God to come. In some versions of the prayer that is all that is said but in others it goes on, “*your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*.” We are praying for the Holy Spirit to show us how to live so that we are able to show others what the Kingdom of God is like. We pray for ourselves, we pray for others, we pray especially for those five people to come into the kingdom with us.

We may feel, sometimes, that our prayers are insignificant, but then, so is one raindrop, and yet, when joined with many others it can become part of a monsoon. God hears our prayers, all of them. Every time we pray, or think about praying, we are given the privilege of a conversation with our Creator.

As the hymn says

*‘What a Friend we have in Jesus*

*All our sins and griefs to bear!*

*What a privilege to carry*

*Everything to God in prayer! ‘*

We believe, we pray, and we pray for five others, known to us, to enter into the Kingdom of God. Amen.

Barbara Symons

*Referrenced:Thy Kingdom Come website Easter Pilgrim daily reflections - Days 11 & 13*

An Introduction to New Testament Christology Raymond Brown Paulist Press 1994

Luke for Everyone Tom Wright SPCK 2001

Introducing the New Testament John Drane Lion 1999

Hymn ‘What a friend we have in Jesus’ Lyrics by Joseph Scriven