

*Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven* (LK. 11.2). Someone has said the best way to know what a person believes is to listen to their prayers. The previous verse is part of a prayer Jesus prayed in response to the disciples request that he teach them how to pray. This famous prayer instructs us to pray for the Father's will to be evidenced on earth as in heaven. Primarily, that people's behavior on earth would become increasingly similar to heavenly behavior. Isn't that what we desire to see among those of us who claim the name Christian?

Yet, Barna Research Group and other organizations survey results reveal little-to-no difference in actual behavior and moral beliefs among many who refer to themselves as Christians from those of the general American populace. When one considers all the teaching, sermons, and money spent on resources, it's reasonable to ask, why is a weak Church the result? Dallas Willard's in his classic work, "The Divine Conspiracy" offers a possible reason: the Church isn't weak despite all that is taught; rather it is precisely due to what is being taught (pp.40-1). His contention is that much of the Church has focused on "sin management". The primary attention has been on the message of forgiveness. Forgiveness is an important reality of Kingdom life, but by itself does not constitute the entirety of the gospel. Jesus came proclaiming the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom (MK. 1.14-15). The gospel we find in the bible is about character transformation; populating the earth with a new kind of humanity, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4.22-4). It's about earthy humans putting off carnal thinking and practices and putting on the new nature of Christ.

This divine transformation in humanity is what the prophets foretold. Jeremiah spoke of a day when God would make a new covenant with his people by writing his law upon their hearts (31.31-3). Ezekiel spoke of it this way, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances* (36:25-27). This is the kind of life Jesus made possible for all humanity through the incarnation, death, resurrection, and out pouring of the Spirit. This is the promised life in the Kingdom.

If the Kingdom is what the prophets foretold and looked forward to, and what Jesus spoke of more than anything else, why do we hear so little about it today? Perhaps one reason is many believe in a doctrine that postpones the Kingdom until Christ's return. Another possibility could be bumper sticker slogans such as "*Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven*" seems for some to have capsulized the entirety of the Christian message. This view makes Christianity primarily about forgiveness and being made ready to go to heaven, rather than the true message of heaven coming into us. Jesus, however, taught us to pray that heaven would descend upon us, recreating us into the likeness of Christ.

When is the last time you heard a message on the Kingdom of God? If you are a teacher or preacher, when is the last time you spoke on the Kingdom? Jesus said, *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”* (Matt. 28.19-2). One may ask, is it possible to obey all Jesus commanded? Jesus believed we could, with his help. And furthermore, he promised to be with us always.

May our Lord’s Prayer be fulfilled in us!

Blessings,

*Pastor Charles*