



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"Thy Kingdom Come" - How to Pray Sermon Series

Christopher Pan

Good morning. I'm Chris Pan and I'm on staff at the church. Thanks as always for the opportunity to serve this church, and to speak today.

We are continuing in our How to Pray sermon series, and my sermon title today is, "Thy Kingdom Come."

I'm excited to talk about the Kingdom of God and the role that our church plays in that Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God—it is life as God intends for all of us, and all of creation. The Kingdom of God has already broken into our present world, and even though it is not yet fully realized, the Kingdom of God is advancing.

As we go through the sermon today, ask yourself these two questions: "What is God saying to me?" and "What does God want me to do about it?"

We are at a particularly interesting time in the life of our church. We've spent an extended time these past months exploring and learning How To Pray. The last few weeks, we've explored transformation, silence and solitude, confession, and intercession. The last two weeks, Pastor Dan has given us practical opportunities to pray for each other as a church. We've ended

service praying for each other. We have all become members of the prayer team. We've heard from a number of people how encouraging the past few weeks have been.

One of our pastors received this email of encouragement from one of you, and I have permission to share. This person emailed, after last weeks service: "I feel that yesterday we turned a new leaf for our entire church! God is doing a new thing! I perceive it! I don't want to miss it! I want to be swept into it! I think we're definitely on the right track! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!"

Every sentence in that email ended in an exclamation point. I share that emailer's enthusiasm. Because I agree! God is doing a new thing, and I also want to be swept up into it. We want this whole church to be swept up into it. The Kingdom of God is advancing. God is on the move. God is making waves.

This church is full of some very good surfers. And surfers know this truth: Surfers don't plan waves. They prepare to ride the waves when they come. Surfing is not like going to the driving range or the batting cages. You don't plan and say,

"I've got 30 minutes. I'll get through this bucket of balls."

When you surf, you get yourself in the right place, you prepare, and then you wait. You wait for the wave, which comes on its schedule, not ours. And we as a church, throughout this How to Pray Sermon series, are putting ourselves in the right place, preparing ourselves, and waiting, for what God is doing and for what God is going to do. We are praying and preparing for what God is going to do, on His schedule, not ours.

As you heard in the announcements, today is the last Sunday of our Acts 1:8 Capital Appeal. The purpose of the Appeal was to celebrate the past, to celebrate what God has done in moving us to this campus, and it was also to prepare us for the future—to prepare us for the next 10, 30, 50 years of what God will be doing to us and through us to advance His Kingdom.

The Bible verse for the capital appeal was Jesus's final words to His disciples on earth after His resurrection and before He ascended to heaven. Acts 1:8. Do you know the context of that verse?

We read this in the book of Acts, Chapter 1, verse 6.

So when the apostles had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

That’s the context for Acts 1:8. Jesus is answering the apostles question about the restoration of the Kingdom of God.

There are two themes in that verse that really capture where this church is going, now and in the future.

1. FIRST. We are and will be a church that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity: God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the coming months, Pastor Dan will be speaking much more about Prayer and the Holy Spirit. In November we’ll be hosting a conference on the Holy Spirit with H.I.M.

2. SECOND. We are to be God’s witnesses in both our local community and to the ends of the earth. Next week, we’ll begin sign-ups for Do Justice Saturday to be held on September 23rd, where we serve our local community. As you heard earlier, Pastor Dan is in the Philippines this week with pastors from around the island and around the mainland, working to advance God’s Kingdom for the neediest of children through Compassion International. We are a church on

a mission. And that mission, the mission of the Church and followers of Jesus, is advancing the Kingdom of God. Because we’re not here to do church. We’re here to advance the Kingdom. We’re not in the church business—we’re in the Kingdom business.

That’s what I want to talk about today. I want to encourage you today. Because it has been a hard time for many of us. Sickness, death, difficulties of all sorts. It has been hard. But, know this: the Kingdom of God is advancing.

The Kingdom of God has been advancing. You know how I know? Because we are at the end of the earth! Hawaii is the most isolated population center on face of the earth. We’re 9,000 miles and 2,000 years from Jerusalem. They started with 11 guys and two Mary’s. And here we are, 2,000 years later, 9,000 miles away: We are Jesus’ witnesses, at the end of the earth.

God is not in retreat. God is not shaken. God is on the move, restoring and redeeming the world. God and God’s kingdom is advancing. And we know how the story ends.

I want to put this in perspective. Here’s a diagram.

You might think, today in church, we’re talking about the Kingdom of God. Church is the big circle, and Kingdom the little circle. But the Kingdom is not a subset of church or church activity.

In reality, the Kingdom of God is the big circle. It is big and expansive and advancing. The church is a subset of Kingdom

activity. The purpose of the church is to further God’s Kingdom!

This is the How to Pray sermon series, and we’re going to have time for practical application. We are going to pray, right now, together, the Lord’s Prayer, which is where the title of the sermon comes from. So, take a deep breath, close your eyes if you wish, and I will guide us through the Lord’s Prayer. Make these words your own as I pray them.

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.

Thy Kingdom come! What does it mean when we pray, “Thy Kingdom Come?” The Kingdom of God is life as God intends it to be, for us and for all of creation.

The Kingdom of God is a big theme in the Bible. The first book of the Bible, in the beginning, there was the Garden of Eden. God, man, and woman, walked in the garden together, in perfect relationship. That’s God’s original blueprint, the picture of life as God intends it to be.

But Adam and Eve, turned away from God, and that picture is tarnished. And since the Garden of Eden, from the first book of the Bible to the last, God has been reestablishing and restoring His Kingdom, because of His great love and longing for relationship with us.

In the movie called, "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," there is a character who keeps repeating this line: "Everything will be all right in the end. If it's not all right, then it's not yet the end."

So, let's start today with the end. Because we know how our story and God's story about His love for the world is going to end. And everything will be all right in the end.

In the Book of Revelation Chapter 21, the second to last chapter of the Bible, the apostle John, writes about the culmination of the Kingdom of God: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the home of God is now among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them;*

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also He said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'

6 Then He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who are victorious will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.'

That is the end of the story. That is the full realization of the Kingdom of God.

You know, I long for that full realization of the Kingdom of God. Especially now, in times of difficulty and mourning. I ache and my heart groans to God. I want that. I want that now. No death, or mourning, or crying or pain. All things made new. That desire is our hearts groaning: "Thy Kingdom come!"

On one hand, that full realization of the Kingdom of God is not yet here. It is a promise for the future.

But I have good news today. And that is that we don't have to wait. The Kingdom of God is not far away in time or space. The Kingdom of God is near. In fact, the Kingdom of God is already here in our present world. The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of God. There is a new timeline, and the Kingdom of God is now a present reality—not fully realized, but it is already here.

The Kingdom of God is both already here, but Not Yet fully realized. Already, but Not Yet.

We heard in Acts 1:8, the last things Jesus said in His ministry on earth. Here are the first things Jesus says as He starts His ministry. In the gospel of Mark, Chapter 1:14: *"Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near.'*

In the gospel of Luke, again at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus walked into a synagogue in Nazareth, and stood up and proclaimed that He was the

fulfillment and culmination of God's plan to restore His kingdom.

Because from the Garden of Eden, God is working to restore His Kingdom.

God chooses Abraham and makes a covenant with him, establishing a people and nation. That nation of Israel, is taken into captivity in Egypt, but God raises a leader named Moses, to free the nation of Israel from captivity, and lead them to the promised land. In the promised land, actual kings named David and Solomon, preside over a peaceful and flourishing kingdom. But the people turn away from God, and Israel loses their land, and temple, and the picture of a flourishing kingdom fades from memory.

Then prophets emerge, like Isaiah and Ezekiel, who encourage the people, and predict a King and a kingdom greater than David's and Solomon's. A King and a kingdom of justice, and fairness and peace. A King who would preach good news to the poor, release captives and the oppressed, make the blind see, and declare the year of the Lord's favor.

And then 700 years pass. And Jesus walks into the synagogue in Nazareth, is handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and starts to read this:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-21)

Jesus says the Kingdom is here, now. And you know what, over the next three years of Jesus' life, what He described is exactly what happened—the blind began to see, the oppressed were released, good news was preached to the poor.

Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God more than any other topic. In the gospel of Luke, Chapter 10 when Jesus sends out the 70 disciples into the towns ahead of Him, their instructions were: "Cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

The Kingdom of God has come near to you. It is not far away in space or far away in time. It is near to us.

Jesus initiated the kingdom of God, here on earth.

Already, but Not Yet. With Christ, the Kingdom is here. We already share in its blessings, we are already in the Kingdom of God. And as we pray, THY kingdom come, we have confidence in our future and we long for its full realization.

Sometimes, we pray for healing, and our prayers are answered, because the kingdom is already here. And sometimes, we pray for healing, and it doesn't happen, because the Kingdom is not yet fully realized, and we long for it. In both instances we continue to pray, "Thy Kingdom Come".

Here's a simple chart to show this theological truth—the fact that we are living in an age of Already, but Not Yet.

We have two overlapping timelines. On the bottom, our present age, our old timeline, which will come to an end. But when Jesus came, another timeline began on top, a Kingdom timeline. And we are in this period of living in the tension, the tension of a Kingdom that has already begun, but is not yet fully realized.

A theologian has a World War II analogy to help understand the Already and Not Yet nature of the Kingdom.

It is distinction between D-day and VE-day in World War II. D-Day began on June 6, 1944. It was the decisive battle of the war, when Allies landed in Normandy.

By winning on D-Day and the months following, the Allies dealt a fatal blow to Germany. Following D-Day, generals on both sides acknowledged that Nazi defeat was inevitable. But the war didn't end for another year, until VE-Day. Although in principle the war had been effectively won on D-Day, the victory was not fully realized as actual fact until VE-Day. Between D-Day and VE-Day, there were still many months of suffering and struggle and battles as the Allied armies, little by little, pushed back Nazi forces.

D-Day for the Kingdom happened when Jesus declared, "It is finished" on the cross, and rose from the dead. Jesus has fought and won the decisive battle. Satan has been defeated and the restoration of Kingdom of God has been inaugurated.

Satan may still be fighting some fierce battles in our lives, but the war has been won. Christ, through the church, is driving back the forces of darkness. VE-Day isn't fully here yet, but because of God's triumph on D-Day, we know how the story ends. And we can live with hope and confidence.

The author Reggie McNeal writes this:

"The Kingdom champions the life that God intends for all of us to experience on this planet, in this lifetime. This epic adventure is worthy of our lives because it is the story of life as God has always intended—where good triumphs over evil and light chases away darkness. God's perfect plan will not be fully realized until Jesus returns, but in the meantime he wants us to pray that the Kingdom will break in to our hearts, bringing transformation to our lives, and break out into the world, bringing hope amid hurt and fostering a better world in the face of immense problems, as we refuse to allow evil and suffering to have the final word in our lives."

Can I tell you story that captures these themes, of the Kingdom, prayer, and our role in the advancing the Kingdom?

This is a picture of Moses, who lives in Swaziland. Moses has a wife and eight children, who range in age from pre-school to high school. Moses is a wood carver, carving canes, bowls, utensils and ornaments to make a living to support his family. Moses has a disabled leg, so he has lots of difficulty walking.

A few months ago, Moses was in a very difficult spot.

Because of his disability, he was unable to get more wood. His pile of wood to use for carving had dwindled to just one lonely skinny log. Without wood, he would have a hard time continuing as a wood carver, and if he could not be a wood carver, he could not provide for his family.

So in his desperation, Moses prayed to God, asking for God's help, God's provision. God's miraculous intervention in his life. For the breaking in of God's Kingdom into his life. Thy Kingdom come.

God answered Moses' prayer. You want to know how? Last month, after Moses prayed, a group of American high school students happened to be in Swaziland on a mission trip with their church youth group.

They were there in Swaziland, working with a local church in Moses' village to do a variety of things, including to help build a house. And as they were building a house, out of stones and wood, they came across a lonely piece of wood. And they tried to take this lonely skinny log to use to help build the house.

At which point, Moses said, "Stop! That's my last piece of wood for wood carving." At this point, the students could have said sorry, and left it. But something else happened. One student asked, "Can I see?" Can I see what you carve?"

And so Moses showed him and the student asked, "Are you selling this?" And so the student bought a wooden cane. When the student brought it back to his youth group, all the other students said, "That's awesome!" and they went to see Moses' carvings, and they bought one piece and

another, and another, until they bought all his carvings.

And through a translator, Moses said to students, "You are the answer to my prayer." With the money from selling the carvings, Moses said that he now had enough money to hire a tractor, to take him to the area where he could get more wood. And with a tractor he would be able to get enough wood so that he could finally make enough products to take sell at the local artisan's fair.

Of course you know who those students are. Some of them are here right now. They were our students, from our church.

The Kingdom of God is advancing. God is on the move. God answered Moses' prayer through us, through our students who went to the other side of the world to show God's miraculous intervention.

Here's a picture of our students and chaperones standing in front of the stone and wood house they helped build.

Again, the author Reggie McNeal writes:

"The Kingdom of God is an invading force, expanding the rule and reign of God against a dark kingdom that will inevitably collapse. God invites us to participate in His liberation campaign, but the Kingdom moves forward whether we choose to participate or not. If we opt out, we will miss the abundant life that God has in mind for us. But if we respond to Jesus' call to live as Kingdom agents everywhere we go, we will experience the joy of seeing God at work."

Thy Kingdom Come.

We are going to close our service today the same way we've ended the last two Sundays: in prayer, for each other. Because it is a beautiful thing. We are praying and preparing for what God is going to do.

In a few moments, we'll invite those who have a prayer need—emotional, financial, spiritual, physical—to be brave, and stand up where you are seated. Acknowledge your need for prayer, your need for God's intervention in your life. And then we'll invite the people around you to be brave, and step out of their comfort zone, and stand, perhaps walk over to someone in need, and pray for you. Over the last two weeks, we have all become members of the prayer team.

As Dan mentioned last week, for those who stand to receive prayer, if you don't want to say what the issue is, that's okay, you can just say, "please pray for me."

And for those praying, please ask permission to place your hand on someone. And remember, when you pray, you can do so silently and briefly. God knows and hears you and He's the one doing the work.

We received this email on Tuesday last week from one of you: "On Sunday morning, I mustered up the courage to stand when you asked for us who needed prayer. (I had actually planned to go to the healing service that afternoon.)

"Well, I asked for prayers to heal my concussion. I felt a little warmth and came home so tired and slept from noon till 4pm.

I felt so rested (I thought from the unusually long nap.)

"I suffer from many chronic joint and muscle pains. On Monday morning, I woke up renewed. Free of all pain and all of the concussion symptoms! It lasted throughout the day. So far, even this morning when asked my pain level, I reported zero!

"Praise God for reminding me that He knows my needs and we just need to ask!"

Not only does God use us to answer Moses' prayer in Swaziland, He uses us right here too. Because God is here. God is kind. And God is able and wants to hear your prayer.

And so now, if you have a prayer request, please stand. God sees you and smiles at you. For those who are nearby, please stand and pray for your brothers and sisters in the Kingdom.

Lord, hear our prayers.

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Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org and the audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by emailing: fpchkoolau@gmail.com