

**SI:** The Latin Church Father Tertullian called the Lord’s Prayer  
“a compendium of the Gospel.”

All the Gospel, all Christian theology, is found in the Lord’s Prayer.

In one sense it’s so simple that even a Christian child can pray it and understand,  
but it also has a depth that the most mature Christian can’t completely fathom.

I was struck by that in my study this week.

The petition of the Lord’s Prayer we’re about to look at opens so many doors,  
and has so many implications, that you can’t even begin to cover them all.

So what I want to do this morning, is lean on the catechism.

Because it gives such a helpful, basic understanding for us.

Before we read the Scripture, as a way to get our minds warmed up—  
let’s recite this catechism question in unison.

**INTRO:** As you all know, I've always thought highly of Tim Keller. Until recently, he the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in NYC.

He started that church in 1989.

He retired from the pastorate in 2017 so he could focus on the worldwide church planting ministry he started called City to City.

By the way, just this month he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and is undergoing treatment.

Well, a number of years ago I heard Tim Keller speak at a conference.

And he said Redeemer Presbyterian has helped plant 100 churches in NYC through training, support, finances, people.

But what was interesting is that of those 100 churches, only 15 of them are PCA.

Only 15 of the 100 are churches of our denomination, Presby Church in America. All the others are churches of various other evangelical denominations.

For example, a Southern Baptist minister came to NYC with a desire to plant a church and he came to Redeemer for help.

They coached him in church planting and supported him financially, and eventually that church grew into one of the largest Southern Baptist congregations in the city.

Some of you may know Tom Richter, the pastor at First Baptist here in Cullman.

He planted a Baptist church in Queens, got training and support from Redeemer.

Dr. Keller's comment at this conference was:

The PCA can't reach everybody.

And besides, he said, we aren't interested in only growing our church or our denomination, we want to advance the kingdom of God in NYC.

I think that's a remarkable statement for several reasons.

But the reason I shared that story with you is because it's such a helpful picture of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not just the church—

whether we're speaking of individual congregations, or denominations, or even the church as a whole.

The church is certainly an outward manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth.

But the kingdom of God is much bigger than the church.

What is the kingdom of God?

It's the reign of King Jesus.

His reign starts in the hearts and minds of men and women, boys and girls.

And then, from the hearts of his people, the influence of Christ's reign extends over their own thoughts and lives and behavior, their marriages and families, their friends and interests, their churches and schools and workplaces, their neighborhoods and towns and cities, and even the cultural and civic life of their nations.

The kingdom of God is the gentling effects of the Gospel, changing individual people, and then spreading out in concentric circles, and changing those they touch and influence.

The kingdom of God is the saving work of Christ in our own lives and in the sweep of human history during this Gospel Age, and in the Second Coming and the Age to Come.

The Lord says, When you pray, I want you to have that big view.

After you have praised God for who he is and thanked him for the good things he has done for you and given you, then you should pray that his kingdom will come.

Pray for the growth and advance and fulfillment of God's plan of salvation and the redemptive work of Christ in the world.

That should be one of your priorities in prayer, and a grid through which you filter all your prayer requests.

Why? Two reasons.

First, in a mysterious, supernatural way, our prayers are one of the means God uses to bring about his kingdom. I don't know how. It's certainly not in a way we can measure. But it's real. As we pray, his kingdom is advanced.

And second, and this is much easier to understand, as we pray for the kingdom, it changes us. Changes our perspectives, our values, even our view of history. As we pray for the kingdom, we become more kingdom-minded.

Let's look more carefully, and we'll use the outline from the catechism.

1. You must pray that the kingdom of grace will be advanced.
2. You must pray that the kingdom of darkness will be destroyed.
3. You must pray that the kingdom of glory will be hastened.

## **MP#1 You must pray that the kingdom of grace will be advanced.**

One of the ways the New Testament speaks of salvation is in terms of the kingdom of God.

Paul describes salvation as being delivered from the dominion of darkness and being brought into the kingdom of Christ.

We are born into the kingdom of darkness. Our parents don't have to teach us how to sin. We know how and we like it because we born with sinful natures. So salvation is taking us out of that kingdom, and giving us citizenship in the kingdom of God. It's not just a change in our status, it's a change in the way we think and act. It's a change in our loyalty.

Christ himself described salvation as having the kingdom within you.

The idea is that when God's grace really comes into your life, it starts to rule you. It starts to govern the way you think, and what you consider right and wrong, and what is important to you—and that, of course, affects your behavior, how you treat your family, how you use your words, how you work, how spend your money, where you spend your time, and on and on. And it transforms families and marriages, and it can transform societies.

One of the old Puritans put it this way:

“When grace comes, there is a kingly government set up in the soul.

Grace rules the will and affections and brings the whole man in subjection to Christ.”

Isn't that a lovely way to express it? Jesus wants you to pray for that rule of grace.

First, pray this for yourself, that the kingdom of grace will be advanced in your own soul and that you will personally come under the reign of Christ more fully and completely. You know where you struggle. You know the areas of your life that need to come more under his control.

Next, pray this for your family members—parents, brothers and sisters. If married, your spouse, if you have children, your children.

It's so easy with our children to pray for them to do well in school, and make good grades, and have good friends, and be happy in work and love. But all those things shouldn't be your first prayer for them.

It should be that they walk with Christ, and know his claim on their lives, and love what he loves and hate what he hates, that they are kingdom-minded. All your requests for them should be filtered through that grid.

Don't just pray that they will get a job so they will make lots of money and be

personally fulfilled. Pray that they will get a job so they can serve Christ.  
Pray for your church, for its members and officers and staff.

Pray for other churches you know and love.

Because through the church people are brought into the kingdom and disciplined.

And the church is the visible manifestation of Christ's kingdom.

And pray for missionaries, because they are following a special calling  
to advance the kingdom of grace in places where it is not known.

And even though all Christians can't go to the mission field,  
all can have a part in the work through prayer.

Have you ever heard of the Haystack Prayer Meeting?

It's one of the most significant events in American church history.

One Saturday afternoon in August, 1806, in Williamstown, Mass,  
five Williams College students met in a field near the college to talk about  
the spiritual needs of Asia and the possibility of missions.

You have to understand that missions, as we know it today, was not practiced  
by the Protestant church 200 years ago. Churches and denominations did not  
send out missionaries to foreign countries. Many people were opposed to it.  
But the idea of missions was starting to stir in the church, these students were  
talking about it when an afternoon thunderstorm blew in. So they ran to a  
haystack in the field, and sat under it, and they began to pray for Asia.

Later one of them said that the suddenness of the storm, and the intimacy  
of the place had a profound effect on them. After they prayed, pledged to act.  
Two of them decided to go India. So they all organized a mission board to raise  
money and support. Over next 50 years, that board sent 1200 missionaries.  
Over next 150 years, that mission board sent 5000 missionaries to 34 countries.  
That Haystack Prayer meeting changed the hearts of those who prayed,  
and it advanced the kingdom. Wouldn't it be great if one of our own covenant  
children answered that call and became a full-time missionary from this church?

Pray for the kingdom of grace to be advanced, and not only will you be changed,  
but you will have the privilege of participating in the kingdom.

But everywhere the kingdom of God advances, there is opposition.

That brings us to the second point:

**MP#2 You must pray that the kingdom of darkness will be destroyed.**

When you pray that something will be destroyed, you're cursing.

Should Christians ever curse? The immediate answer that comes to mind is no. Jesus tells us to love our enemies. Jesus himself prayed, Father, forgive them. Seems to be no way that Jesus' command and example would permit cursing. But as you read the whole of Scripture, you realize the answer is more complicated.

Many of the Psalms contain curses. David asks God to destroy his enemies. He says things like smash their teeth, O Lord. May children be fatherless. Ps 109 In Paul's letter to the Galatians he is very angry at false teachers in the church and he says: Let them be Anathema. Let them be cursed. Let them be damned.

And in the book of Revelation there is a glimpse of heaven in chapter 5. John sees souls of martyrs standing before God. Christians killed for faith in Christ. They are saying:

"How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

Here are the souls of the righteous calling for God to bring them down the enemies of the church for blood of Christians they have shed.

How can you love your enemies, and pray that Father will forgive them— at the same time pray with deep feeling for God to bring certain people down? Does the Bible contradict itself?

Paul writes in Rom 12 "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse."

And he writes in 1 Cor 16 "If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be on him.

Is this a contradiction. No. As a Christian you are commanded to love enemies, and there are also times when a Christian must curse the enemies of God— as Paul did, and David, and saints in heaven do.

And as Jesus did when he pronounced his Woes upon the Pharisees and teachers.

If you pray: Your kingdom come. Then you will also hope and pray that anything that stands against the Kingdom of God will be brought down.

If you're a true Alabama fan, what do you pray the day of the Auburn game?

"O great Spirit of Bear Bryant: May Alabama be victorious on gridiron this day."

And what is, by necessity, your next prayer?

"And may Auburn go down in humiliating defeat."

Your desire for victory means a corresponding desire for defeat of the other team.

No true Alabama fan would ever say:

I want Alabama to win, but I don't want Auburn to lose. Of course not.

If you make the victory of Christ's kingdom your first prayer—

you will by necessity pray for the defeat of all rival kingdoms.

This does not in any way give you permission to hate or curse people for

the personal harm they do to you. You have to love them and pray for blessing. The curses in the Bible aren't personal vindictiveness. They are prayers that the kingdom of darkness will be defeated.

I've shared this illustration with you a number of times, but it's so helpful. I got a letter a number of years ago from a little church out in the county informing other churches in Cullman that they were starting a ministry to meth addicts. It had statistics about meth use in Cullman, but it was essentially a prayer letter with two prayer requests.

First, pray for the drug addicts who came to program that they would be saved body and soul by Jesus Christ, and delivered from addiction. And second, pray that the kingdom of the meth makers and pushers and sellers would be destroyed. That wasn't the exact language, but that was the spirit. Break the teeth of the wicked, O Lord.

Obviously, the people in this ministry would have rejoiced if every meth maker and pusher got saved and willingly quit their business.

But if not, they wanted them destroyed because they opposed kingdom of God.

Martin Luther summed it up well:

“We should pray that our enemies be converted and become our friends, and if not, that their doing and designing be bound to fail and have no success and that their persons perish rather than the gospel and the kingdom of Christ.”

What enemies?

You could start with the enemies in your own soul. Ask the Lord to bring down your own idols and your personal kingdom of comfort and selfishness.

You could pray for the persecuted church.

620 Christians have been killed in Nigeria so far this year.

Ask the Lord to bring down the evil forces that are killing them.

And of course, that's just one example.

You could pray for this country, that the Lord will confuse the false ideologies that keep people in spiritual darkness.

I don't know your prayer life, but I don't pray that way nearly enough.

This brings us to the third point.

**MP#3 You must pray that the kingdom of glory will be hastened.**

What's the kingdom of glory? It what starts when Jesus returns.

When we pray: Thy kingdom come—we are ultimately praying for Jesus to come back quickly and set all things right and wipe away every tear.

In fact, the Bible ends with this prayer. Revelation 22:20.

Jesus says: Yes, I am coming soon.

And the church answers: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The Christians who pray the most for Jesus to come back soon are always those who have faced persecution and suffering, and have really fought against sin.

They long for the kingdom of glory to come and for things to be set right.

How often do you pray that the kingdom of glory will be hastened?

How often to you pray: Lord Jesus, come quickly?

Often? Seldom? Never? Why don't you pray for him to come?

I'll tell you why.

Because you're more concerned, day to day with your own little kingdom.

We all have our own little kingdoms, don't we.

We have the places in our life where we exert some influence and want things to go our way—might be our work and career, our family, our finances, or some other sphere of life.

You must deliberately pray: Thy kingdom come. Not, my kingdom come.

Do our prayers really hasten the day of his coming?

That's a hard question to answer. The Bible speaks of an appointed day.

A day determined in the unchanging counsel of God's will.

But at the same time, the Bible says that when certain things happen, that day will appear, things that we can do—like the preaching of Gospel to all nations, and praying earnestly for his return.

So it's a mystery, let's leave it at that.

But what is not a mystery, in fact, it's quite clear, is that praying for Jesus' return will change you.

It makes you more calm. The things you worry about, even the big things will be put in perspective.

I was talking to a church member once about the erosion of religious liberty in America, and we were really getting worked up and worried.

And then we laughed at ourselves and said: We're citizens of the Kingdom of God. Christ is coming. What do we have to worry about?!

It will make you more content—with your marriage, your work, life God has given. Jesus Christ the King of Glory is coming. He has great things planned for you



This life is so short. It's just a breath. It's just a vapor.  
It's just a preparation for greater days. You can make it.

It will give you a proper fear of sin as you ponder that he is coming soon.  
What do you want him to find you doing when he returns?  
You want him to find you working as a faithful servant.

And it will get you ready for death.

We think so little about death in our youth-worshipping culture, but the hour of your death is approaching.  
And nothing prepares you more than a lifetime of praying for that future kingdom.

John Calvin said it is the task of the church to make the invisible kingdom visible.  
We do that by living in such a way that we bear witness to the reality  
of the kingship of Christ in our jobs, our families, our schools, our checkbooks,  
because Christ is king over every one of those spheres of life.  
They aren't our kingdoms, they are his.

Where do we get power to live that way?

Christ has showed the way—it's through prayer.  
It's by praying often that his kingdom will come—  
that the kingdom of grace will be advanced,  
that the kingdom of darkness will be destroyed,  
and that the kingdom of glory will be hastened.

Sometimes this prayer will come naturally, sometimes you will have to deliberately remind yourself that this is how Jesus wants you to pray, and train yourself.  
But how wonderful it will be when his kingdom comes and you will have the joy of a lifetime of prayer for it.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Let every creature rise and bring peculiar honors to our King;  
Angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud Amen!