

Focus Shifts to God, Part 1: Encouragement

Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done – a prayer about what only God can do

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, April 18, 2021
PASSAGES	Matthew 6:9-10; Luke 22:18; Acts 21:10-14; Matthew 26:39-42; Mark 9:1; Luke 17:20; Daniel 7:13-14; Jeremiah 33:7-9; Mark 11:10; Acts 17:24-25
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:38:35 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

What we focus on changes how we pray. Read closely, the first lines of the Lord's Prayer are not chiefly a plea for us to work harder and build God's kingdom for him. They are a God-centered longing: sanctify your name, bring your kingdom, let your will happen – things only he can do, and will do, because he said he would.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Focus matters. Praying “thank you that you are near” instead of “Lord, be with me” is a small shift that changes your whole posture toward God.
- ◆ A human-centered faith quietly turns God into a standard of goodness, Christ into a role model, the Spirit into energy and the Bible into a behavior manual.
- ◆ “Hallowed be your name” asks God to make his reputation holy – set apart, belonging to him alone, carrying a weight nothing else carries.
- ◆ In the Gospels the kingdom “comes” as a decisive public event, so “your kingdom come” is above all a longing for Jesus' return – “Maranatha.”

- ◆ Matthew uses one verb for what people work and another for what happens. “Your will be done” leans toward “may your will happen” – God as the doer.
- ◆ God needs us at zero percent. Obedience and prayer matter, but they rest on the foundation of a competent, near and strong Lord, not on a burden to build his kingdom for him.
- ◆ With the world dark and the church looking incompetent, we may be ripe for a move of God – and no one will be able to credit anyone but him.

► 0:38:35

The morning fell on the global day of prayer for Turkey, remembering three believers murdered in Malatya fourteen years earlier, and Jason led the church in praying for a Turkish church that has grown from almost nothing to thousands – asking, in the words of the early believers, that God would grant his servants to speak his word with all boldness. Then Matt took the pulpit, first correcting something he had said a month earlier: there are many families at Hope involved in fostering and adoption, and he would gladly connect anyone with them.

What you focus on

► 0:40:14

The faithfulness Jason had described, Matt said, does not come from white-knuckling it; there is a focus on Christ that is transformative. Sit with a roommate or spouse and write long lists of what bothers you about each other, put them on the fridge, and dwell on them – “that would affect your dynamic.” What you focus on may not change reality, but it changes how you feel and respond.

► 0:41:49

A spiritual example from his own life: “Lord, be with me, draw near,” versus “God, thank you that you are near, thank you that you are with me.” “Asking for God to be with me versus knowing he is and thanking him for it is a posture shift that affects the way that I pray.”

► 0:42:25

So two weeks on shifting our focus: the Lord’s Prayer today and the Great Commission next week. He gave away next week’s conclusion for those headed to the women’s retreat. When God says in the Old Testament, “do this, I am with you,” it amounts to “I’m going to do it; I’m taking responsibility; you’re with me” – a point he credited to Steve Hawthorne. So when Jesus says “make disciples... I am with you,” it should mean the same, rather than leaving us “broken and embarrassed and burdened about how bad we are at evangelism.”

A human-centered faith

► 0:44:17

“Sometimes we focus so much on ourselves that we’re stuck.” A human-centric lens is the default we have to fight, “like pulling weeds out of your yard all the time.”

► 0:44:48

And it changes everything without our noticing. God becomes “a standard of goodness that you need to live up to instead of God the person who loves and longs to be in a relationship with you.” Christ, the King of kings, becomes merely “our best human example.” The Holy Spirit becomes energy, or is replaced by the Bible, and the Bible becomes a behavior manual. “All this human-focused attention can distort the kind of encouraging, life-giving, dynamic faith that Christianity really is, and cause you to choke yourself.”

Hallowed be your name

► 0:46:44

Jesus first tells his disciples not to babble like the pagans – “God is not deaf... he can hear the faintest whisper of your heart” – nor to pray like hypocrites on street corners with trumpets ([Matthew 6:5–8](#)). Then, fittingly, a short prayer:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 6:9–10 ↗

► 0:48:12

“Hallowed” means make holy – but holy is not the same as pure. A flawless sheep on a hillside is pure, not holy; it becomes holy when it is offered to the Lord. A perfect longhorn is not holy until it is set apart for him. Holiness is belonging to the Lord, unique to him.

► 0:48:37

And “name” means reputation, as in [a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches](#) – not a cool-sounding name like “the artist formerly known as Prince.” To pray it is to ask God to give his reputation a gravitas that is his alone: “Yeah, I’ve heard about UT and I’ve seen the Avengers movies, but have you heard about the God of Israel?”

Your kingdom come: two readings

► 0:49:58

One reading asks God to change our world family by family, village by village – and there are points in its favor. Earth plainly is not yet like heaven, Christ has inaugurated the kingdom, and his will is done on earth by people.

► 0:50:52

But an extreme form of it becomes a heavy burden: “we need to build his kingdom for him,” pray harder, work harder, obey God’s moral expectations better – “and it can kind of crush you.” Matt was not teasing anyone; he wanted people “to walk in freedom... knowing that God is really competent and doesn’t really need our help.”

► 0:52:26

So, the language – “if it is boring you could just draw your mask up higher.” The kingdom as the subject of “come” appears only in the Gospels, but it draws on Old Testament hopes: the one like a son of man given dominion and glory, whom all nations serve ([Daniel 7:13–14](#)); the promise that a restored city will bring God renown before all the nations ([Jeremiah 33:7–9](#)). On Palm Sunday the crowds cried, “[Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!](#)”

► 0:53:45

And “come” usually marks a distinct event, with the emphasis on arrival. The magi’s star *went before* them – one verb – “until it *came* to rest over the place where the child was” ([Matthew 2:9](#)) – another. It is used for the coming of the Son of Man and the day of judgment, “an event that you wouldn’t miss.”

► 0:54:45

Where the kingdom “draws near,” a gradual sense may be right, and Matt wanted to keep it. But paired with “come” it is decisive: some standing there would see the kingdom of God come with power. When the Pharisees asked [when the kingdom of God would come](#), Jesus adjusted their expectations but not their use of the word.

► 0:55:44

“For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

LUKE 22:18 ↗

► 0:56:19

So as we pray it, “we are echoing Paul’s words when he says Maranatha – come, Lord Jesus. It’s almost as if we’re longing for the second coming of Jesus when we say your kingdom come.”

Your will be done: “may it happen”

► 0:56:51

“That wasn’t so bad, right?” In Matthew and Mark “will” is used only of the Father. The harder part is “done,” because two Greek verbs are both translated that way. Matt called one *happen* – used for a storm, a birth, “all this took place” – and the other *work*, used for what people do.

► 0:58:18

In Matthew a pattern appears. When Jesus heals, he says, may it *happen* for you as you asked. When the subject is human obedience, it is *work*: “which of the two worked the will of his father?” (Matthew 21:28–31); only the one who works the will of the Father will enter the kingdom (Matthew 7:21); whoever works the will of the Father is my brother and sister and mother (Matthew 12:50).

► 0:58:50

The Lord’s Prayer uses *happen*. So “thy will be done” is close to “God, may what you want happen” – less about my day-to-day performance, more about what God alone can do. Paired with “your kingdom come,” the whole first half becomes God-focused: sanctify your name as only you can; let your kingdom come; let your will happen.

► 0:59:22

Two places in Scripture people pray it. In Gethsemane, Jesus tells sleepy disciples the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, then prays, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” Most of us, Matt admitted, would be next to Peter, asleep. But Jesus, with Judas already on his way, turns toward what the Father has committed to do and entrusts himself to him.

► 1:01:01

“He took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”’ When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, ‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’”

ACTS 21:11–14 ↗

► 1:02:01

“This is a throwing up of their hands... let God do what he wants to do.” It plainly was not about their moral performance in that moment. So the second reading of the prayer is “a longing for his coming and a trusting in his purposes,” especially when “it’s kind of dark, it’s kind of anxious.”

Room for both, but a primary focus

► 1:03:08

Matt did not want to dismiss the first reading. There is room for degrees of God’s kingdom showing up through us, family by family, here and now, and for people joyfully carrying out his will. “I just don’t want that to eclipse the other way of reading this prayer, which might even be the primary way.” *Your kingdom come* is primarily eschatological, with room for it “to sneak in here and now.” *Your will be done* carries an emphasis on God himself as the doer, in ways beyond us.

► 1:04:12

“I think right now we’re ripe for a move of God, because the world looks really dark and the church looks really incompetent. What could be a better time?”

► 1:04:43

If the church were full of “type-A CEO go-getters,” a revival would look like their doing. Instead – not Hope Chapel, he said, but look at the church across the nation – we fight about the most basic things, dabble in outreach and prayer, and get discouraged. When the awakening comes, “we want him to get the blame.” A seminary professor once told of a church that destroyed itself arguing over what color to paint the gym. “We’re just people.”

God needs us at zero percent

► 1:06:18

Working hard and giving your life is good, “but it cannot be in a foundation of this burdensome, like we need to do it for him and he’s kind of distant and remote... arms crossed and behind you.” “I want you to be convinced in your heart, first of all, that God needs us at zero percent,” as Paul says: God is not served by human hands, as though he needed anything.

► 1:06:48

“If the church coming together with great purity and obedience and unity was what was keeping him from coming back, he would stay gone forever.” Matt still wanted obedience and devotion to prayer, but built on the right focus – especially now, when we are discouraged or confused about the world’s chaos.

► 1:08:10

Turning the Lord’s Prayer into a reminder to behave better diminishes “a powerful prayer of longing for Christ, his lordship, and a trust in God’s larger purposes.” It is like the list on the fridge: what is on it may be true, but it is a poor thing to fix your eyes on. A “me, myself and I” prayer list is boring – “maybe that’s what causes you to be like Peter and fall asleep.” Instead: “Wow, look at that – the Lord of glory, competent captain of our faith, strong, near, very present with us, very kind and compassionate, but also strong, our shield, our strong tower.”

► 1:09:34

Finishing early, Matt had everyone stand and pray the first lines together, rehearsing a God-focused attitude: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven – knowing that only God can do these things, and we know that he will, because he said he would, and he’s the most trustworthy one.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Acts 4:29–30
- Matthew 6:5–8
- Matthew 6:9–10
- Proverbs 22:1
- Daniel 7:13–14
- Jeremiah 33:7–9
- Mark 11:10
- Matthew 2:9
- Mark 9:1
- Luke 17:20
- Luke 22:18
- 1 Corinthians 16:22
- Matthew 21:28–31
- Matthew 7:21
- Matthew 12:50
- Matthew 26:39–42
- Acts 21:11–14
- Acts 17:24–25

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt contrasted “Lord, be with me” with “thank you that you are with me.” What happens in you when you pray the second way?
2. Which of the distortions of a human-centered faith – God as a standard, Christ as a role model, the Spirit as energy, the Bible as a manual – do you recognise in your own faith?
3. What does it mean to you that “hallowed be your name” asks God to make his reputation holy, rather than asking you to try harder?
4. How does reading “your kingdom come” as a longing for Jesus’ return, and “your will be done” as “may your will happen,” change the way you pray about the world’s chaos?
5. Where are you carrying a burden to build God’s kingdom for him? What would it look like this week to obey from the conviction that he needs you “at zero percent”?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Y19UeEZ55o&t=2315s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.