

“Thy Kingdom Come”
(Acts 1:1-11 – Ascension – June 1, 2025)

Acts 1:1-11 – ¹*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ²until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. ⁴And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; ⁵for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”*

Dear Redeemed, in the name of our risen and ascended Savior, Jesus Christ:

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven the disciples asked: “*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*” (vs. 6). After they had seen Jesus risen from the dead and He had shown Himself alive to them over the past forty days, this was the most important question on their minds: Was He now going to establish His kingdom in this world? Was it going to be the kind of kingdom they expected?

Indeed, Jesus taught His disciples to desire the coming of His Kingdom and to pray: **“Thy Kingdom Come.”** But here in His ascension, we learn about the true nature of His Kingdom, and how rightly we are to pray for His Kingdom to come.

1) Jesus has won for us a place in God’s Kingdom by His saving work

Here the Evangelist Luke begins: “*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen*” (vs. 1-2). The former account was Luke’s Gospel, which recorded Jesus’ life from His birth, to all He did and taught in His ministry, to His death and resurrection,

and finally His ascension as witnessed by His apostles. This reminds us, first of all, that Jesus already has come to win for us a place in God's Kingdom by His saving work.

If Jesus had not come for this reason, we would have faced the unthinkable prospect of being shut out of God's Kingdom forever. As sinners before a holy God, we would have been judged guilty and cast in the outer darkness of hell, far from the presence of God. But Jesus went to the cross to take all our sin, guilt, and punishment on Himself. He offered up His innocent life as the payment for our sins. And in raising His Son from the dead, God demonstrated that His sacrifice was sufficient. God forgives all our sins for Jesus' sake, and He counts to us the sinless, righteous life of Jesus lived for us. So through faith in Jesus, we receive the Kingdom and everlasting life He won for us.

It was to demonstrate this truth that He appeared to His disciples in His resurrected body: *"to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"* (vs. 3). As He showed them His nail-pierced hands and spear-pierced side, He gave the proof that by His wounds on the cross He had won forgiveness for all. As He showed them His glorified body, He gave the proof that He lives to give eternal life to all who believe. So He appeared to His disciples for forty days before His ascension, teaching them about the Kingdom of God. Today through the Scriptures, Jesus continues to reveal to us all He has done to win a place for us in His Kingdom.

2) His Kingdom of Grace comes as the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel

But as we see here, He does not reveal all this only for our good. As our ascended Savior, He gives us a mission of sharing the good news of His Kingdom with others. As we pray, "Thy Kingdom come," we learn secondly that His Kingdom of Grace comes to us and others as the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel.

Just before His ascension, Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit as it says: *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'"* (vs. 4-5). John the Baptist had baptized with water; but Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11). In Baptism, Jesus pours out the Spirit, who puts faith in the heart and bring sinners into His Kingdom of Grace. Ten days after Jesus' Ascension, on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus would pour out the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire on the apostles, giving them special gifts and boldness to carry out His mission and bring the Gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Interestingly, it is at this point that the disciples ask: *"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (vs. 6). Already, Jesus had taught them that His

Kingdom was not of this world, but a spiritual Kingdom. It was a Kingdom of Grace in which sinners receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith. Yet, their minds were still on an earthly kingdom. They wondered if the coming of the Holy Spirit meant that Jesus would establish a kingdom of glory in Israel as in the days of David. Would there be an ideal kingdom of peace and prosperity on earth for God's people?

Is this how it is with us at times? Jesus wants to tell us about His heavenly Kingdom, but we are focused on hopes for a kingdom in this world. Sometimes when we pray, "Thy Kingdom come," that voice inside says, "But don't come too quickly. I still have all these goals I want to accomplish, the bucket list of things I want to do, places I want to go, people I want to see. Jesus, Thy Kingdom come... but when I'm ready for it!"

"Thy Kingdom come is a mission-minded prayer. We are asking that His Kingdom would come as the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel to give faith; and that He would use us to share His Gospel with others. But sometimes that voice inside says: "As long as I am happy and successful in life, and I know I'm on my way to heaven, I'm not so concerned about the eternal future and happiness of others."

As we see here, Jesus had patience for His often misfocused disciples. He continued to teach them about the true nature and coming of His Kingdom as He said: "*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*" (vs. 7-8). So He refocused them on their important mission in His Kingdom. Again He promised the Holy Spirit with powerful effect. The Spirit would remind them of all Jesus had taught them, enlighten their understanding, and fill them with courage, making them powerful instruments in His Kingdom. They would be His witnesses to the ends of the earth, proclaiming the Savior who died and rose again for all people.

Likewise, Jesus does not reject us when we are weak in understanding or misfocused in life. He treats us with the same love and patience. In answer to our prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," He continues to bring His Kingdom of Grace to us in His Word and Sacraments. In His Baptism He washes away our sins. In His Absolution, He declares us forgiven. In His Holy Supper, He gives us His body and blood for our forgiveness. And He assures us of great things to come in His eternal Kingdom.

Like those disciples, the more we take Jesus' Word to heart and behold the glory of Him who lived, died, and rose again for our salvation, the more the Holy Spirit will inspire and empower us to share His Gospel with others. As we do, we can trust the Holy Spirit's power to work through that Gospel as He brings His Kingdom of Grace, not only to us, but also to others.

3) Jesus will come again to bring us to His eternal Kingdom of Glory

And finally as we pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” Jesus’ ascension shows us that He will come again to bring us and all believers to His eternal Kingdom of Glory. For He has ascended in power to prepare a place for us in heaven.

It says: *“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight”* (vs. 9). In Jesus’ ascension, He no longer appears visibly on earth as in the days of the apostles. Yet He is everywhere present, filling all things as our God and Brother (Ephesians 4:10). He has not left us, for He promises to be with us always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

At the same time, Jesus sits at the right hand of His Father in that highest position of authority, ruling all things for the good of His Church. He is protecting us so that not even the gates of hell can prevail against us (Ephesians 1:20-23; Matthew 16:18). He is causing His Gospel to proceed to the ends of the earth, gathering more people into His Kingdom of Grace. There at His Father’s right hand He is interceding for us, presenting us as those whom He has cleansed and made holy by His blood, guaranteeing that all our sins are forgiven, guaranteeing that all our prayers are heard and answered for our temporal and eternal good (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:2).

And as our ascended Savior, Jesus guarantees that one day He will return to take us into His Kingdom of Glory. This is the promise as our text concludes: *“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’”* (vs. 10-11).

When Jesus comes again on the clouds in all His glory, He will raise us in glory and take us to the home He is preparing for us in His heavenly Kingdom. As He promised in John 14:2-3: *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*

Therefore, in view of Jesus’ ascension, we can pray confidently as He taught us: “Thy Kingdom Come.” For we know that He already has come to win a place for us in His Kingdom. And He continues to bring His Kingdom of Grace among us as the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel. And at last, He will answer every prayer by bringing us to His Kingdom of Glory to live with Him in perfect peace and joy forevermore.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.