

# TWO COUNTRIES

## MATTHEW 6:9-10

**In this manner, therefore, pray:  
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

On June 6, 1944, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ranger Battalion, consisting of 225 young American troops, landed on the beach at Normandy, France. Their orders were to scale a treacherous 100 foot high cliff - known as *Pointe du Hoc*. The moment these brave soldiers stepped onto the beach they came under heavy fire. On top of the cliff, German troops had dug in with heavy artillery - and were now unleashing a massive assault on the Americans. Of the 225 men who tried to scale the cliff, only 99 survived. But when the bullets stopped flying, and the smoke cleared, the daring mission had been accomplished. Allied troops were on European soil... *It was now only a matter of time...* the continent would soon be liberated.

Today, 67 years later, a bayonet-shaped monument adorns the steep cliff where Ranger blood was shed. It memorializes the courageous D-Day sacrifice of our troops. *It's now a destination for many Ranger families.* Several year ago, Kathie Wintz brought her nine children to Pointe du Hoc. Her father, Richard Wintz, was a lieutenant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. Following the war, Wintz never talked much about the battle. But just before he died in 1981, his family got him to open up and recount his story. Kathie was stunned at how naïve she'd been. She had no idea of the horrors her dad endured, and his heroic show of courage. To help her kids appreciate the sacrifices made by the boys of Pointe du Hoc - which included their granddad - in 1994 Kathie and her family flew to France, stood on the point at Normandy, *and together prayed the Lord's Prayer.*

I'm sure on D-Day in 1944 the Lord's Prayer was prayed loud and often on the beaches of Normandy. There probably wasn't an American GI who didn't at least breathe Matthew 6 and the Lord's Prayer under his breath. *In the heat of battle, you fall back on what you know...* All those little boys who had quoted the Lord's Prayer in Sunday School were now praying it with all the desperation of a soldier fighting for his life.

I'd like to one day go to Pointe du Hoc and also pray the Lord's Prayer. Against that backdrop - in light of the history - a recitation of the Lord's Prayer would be a moving experience... Especially as you come to verse 10, **"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."**

For if ever there was a day in recent history when God's will was done on earth *it was D-Day...* The evil Adolf Hitler was on a rampage. Countries in Europe were falling like dominoes, as the stench of burning Jewish flesh was wafting up to heaven from concentration camp smokestacks. If the Allies had lost on the beaches of Normandy that day we'd probably be speaking German and eating sauerkraut at tonight's picnic. The American flag would have a swastika instead of stars and stripes. On D-Day at Normandy, God answered the prayers of Americans, and took up the cause of freedom. His will was done on earth as it is in heaven. If ever Almighty God wore red, white, and blue it was on June 6, 1944.

But not always has America lined up on God's side. Today, America is hated in Muslim countries, not just because of our politics. Our invasion in Iraq, and our support of Israel is just part of the story. One of the prominent reasons Islamic fundamentalists hate America is due to the filth, corruption, and immorality we traffic all over the world. Religious Muslims hear that America is a Christian country - yet they see the sleazy movies and raunchy music videos Hollywood distributes. They take note of our sexual perversions, our immodesty, our materialism. Western culture is viewed as a threat to the morality of their youth. They watch America legally murder unborn babies in the name of convenience. They see the flood of pornography we export... Is it any wonder we're *the evil empire*? Sadly, America is hated for its decadence.

*And in light of this corruption...* for an American to pray, **"Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"** he or she is not just asking God to protect and prosper us... but to pour out revival, and bring our people to repentance, and turn our nation from its wicked ways. **"God bless America"** is a sweet notion, but it's often sung superficially. I'm sure, at times God is ashamed of the colors - red, white, and blue.

There's one certainty, "Father God and Uncle Sam are not the same person. And if ole Uncle Sam takes an ungodly position, or steers from biblical truths, we need to always side with our Father, not our uncle."

Once, a little boy asked to say the blessing. He closed his eyes, bowed his head, and prayed, "I pledge allegiance..." I wish the USA was so dedicated to God there was little difference between *our prayer* and *pledge*. But that's not the case. There are occasions when our pledge of allegiance to God puts us in conflict with the policies of our nation. I hope you realize God's kingdom is distinct - and far greater - than the United States of America - or any other nation for that matter. The USA is not the world's superpower... The real superpower is the Kingdom of God.

Certainly, our nation has a rich spiritual and faith-filled history. The freedoms defined in the US Declaration of Independence and Constitution would've never been conceived if not for the Protestant Reformation that preceded them. Martin Luther's idea of the priesthood of every believer... laid the foundation for the principle of *one man one vote*. In God's eyes there's no difference between the ploughboy and the king. Both come to God on the same basis - the work of Jesus on the cross. It was the fire of the Reformation that gave birth to the idea of democracy.

Scotsman, Samuel Rutherford, wrote a book in 1644 that he entitled, "Rex Lex" - which means "*law is king*." His book was revolutionary. It flew in the face of the political philosophy in Europe at the time. No longer did a courageous Rutherford accept "*Lex Rex*" or "*the king is law*." He believed men should be governed by laws, *not by other men*. Rutherford's ideas were based on the Bible - especially on Moses and the Law from Mount Sinai. Ancient Israel was governed by God's law - not the will of a man. To be governed by the will of man was a tyranny. Since the Law was given by God the king also needed to be subject to the Law.

When the founding fathers of America gathered for the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Adams, made the statement... "*We have this day restored the Sovereign, to whom alone men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and... from the rising to the setting sun, may His kingdom come*." Adams and the others signers believed they had restored God - and not the king - as their final authority of government.

Where do you think the early Americans got the famous phrase written into the Declaration of Independence... "*certain inalienable rights*?" That refers to rights not conferred upon men by other men, or by the state, but unchallengeable, absolute rights? "*Inalienable rights*" are unchallengeable because they come from our Creator Himself.

You should realize the very notion of freedom has Christian roots. The Bible teaches that God - not man - is the ultimate authority. And since man was made in God's image, everyone should be free to serve God, and be governed by God - with limited intervention from the state.

The American legal system was initially founded on the theories of the British jurist, *William Blackstone*. He believed there were only two bases for law - *nature* and *revelation*. The right approach was God's revelation. And to Blackstone the revealed will of God was found in the Bible. From bankruptcy laws, to private property rights, to judgments for damages - American common law was founded on Scriptural principles.

The American flag that flew over Fort Henry in 1814 was 42 feet by 30 feet - an enormous size. This was the flag Francis Scott Key saw 10 miles out to sea - *in the midst of battle*. It inspired the Star Spangled Banner. For years no one knew how a flag that size could fly from a pole 189 feet tall. You'd think in stormy weather the flag would snap the pole. But a recent discovery has solved the riddle. The National Park Service found a cross-shaped support 9 feet underground near the fort's entrance. As it turns out, it was this cross-shaped beam that supported the huge flag.

*And this is a microcosm of Christianity's role in America...* Freedom flies over our country because of our Christian underpinnings. The Bible alone provides the rationale and precepts that protect individual rights, yet at the same time bringing order to a diverse and changing society. **Without Christianity America would not exist!**

It is certainly true, that the United States of America has a rich spiritual and faith-filled history. This is why I'm proud to be an American. And this is why we should continue to teach future generations of Americans the wisdom of the philosophies on which our country was built.

The future of the house depends on the strength of its foundation.

But what I don't want us to do is to confuse a flawed and feeble human system of government with God's kingdom. Earthly kingdoms can come and go, including the United States - only the Kingdom of God is eternal! From time to time, American interests and God's concerns run parallel. God may use the USA to accomplish His purposes, but that doesn't make us immune to His judgment... when we're weighed in the balance and found lacking - God will set us aside, and raise up another nation!

British journalist, Malcolm Muggeridge was speaking in Washington DC. Throughout his talk he'd been very negative in his outlook on world affairs. After his speech a reporter asked, "You've been very pessimistic. Don't you have any reason for optimism?" Muggeridge was surprised, "*Friend, I could not be more optimistic than I am, because my hope is in Jesus Christ alone.*" He paused to let the thought sink in, and then he finished, "*Just think if the first church had pinned its hopes on the Roman Empire!*" Ancient Rome was proof that even superpowers – even democratic superpowers - outlive their usefulness, and fall victim to sin and corruption.

Yes, I'm privileged to be American... Yes, I gladly pledge my allegiance to my country... And appreciate the sacrifices of the men and women who fight to keep us free... Yes, I'd take up arms for my country if needed...

*But do I believe God travels on an American passport?* No!

*Do I believe Jesus will come back to earth onboard Air Force One?* No!

*Do I believe God is somehow indebted to America?* No!

*Do I believe He'll bless today just because He's done so in the past?* No!

I ran across a quote by a man named JB Priestly. He writes... "*We should behave toward our country as women behave toward the men they love. A loving wife will do anything for her husband except stop criticizing and trying to improve him. We should cast the same affectionate, but sharp glance at our country.*" Let's nag our nation to righteousness.

On the eve of the battle of Jericho, Joshua encountered a soldier with a drawn sword. Joshua confronted the fellow following military protocol... He barked at him, "*Are You for us or for our adversary?*" The man said, "*No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.*" Joshua said, "*Friend of foe?*" And in essence, the man said "*neither*"... He was neither on *Israel's side* or *Jericho's side*, but on **God's side**. And this is the question all nations and people should ask – not is *God on our side*, but are *we on His side*? God's kingdom stands above all!

The OT taught that the kingdom of God would be an earthly, political kingdom. The last book of the NT, Revelation, also takes up this theme. God reveals to John a day when Jesus will return to earth. Our Lord comes riding a white horse - a war horse. He's leading an army of the redeemed into battle. He destroys the Antichrist, and all the earth's armies. In one day, Jesus will restore order... He'll right all wrongs, throw down wicked rulers, wipe out evil, establish His throne over a fallen planet, enforce a true peace, and bring about the restoration God has promised. Revelation 11 tells us, "*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever...*"

In one sense, to pray "*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" is to pray for that day... At the end of Revelation, John is able to sing, "*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord...*" He has been given a glimpse of the apocalyptic events leading up to the Second Coming... In response, John prays, "*Even so, come Lord Jesus.*" It's interesting, at the end of his long life, and in light of such remarkable revelations – John, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples - reverts back to the first prayer he was taught – *the Lord's Prayer*... "*Your kingdom come.*"

When I see corrupt politicians abuse our trust – and wicked people prosper - and bad guys get away with their crimes - and suicide bombers kill innocent people - and the Church get persecuted - and children starving to death in Africa - and women sold as sex slaves - and nations at war... *I long for the day when God's kingdom will rule over this earth.* One day Jesus will come in power and glory. He'll bring justice and healing. He'll establish His authority over all the kingdoms of the earth. Thus, we all should all pray, "*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" *This is one way to pray for the Kingdom of God.*

*But there's another way to pray this line in the Lord's Prayer.* In Matthew 13:11 Jesus speaks of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." The full meaning of God's Kingdom isn't explained by the OT prophecies and the book of Revelation. There's more to the Kingdom... Before God's kingdom comes with *military might*, and *political muscle*, and *global glory* it comes spiritually into human hearts. Before the kingdom appears on earth in a tangible, visible form – it first grows *gradually, subtly, invisibly, spiritually*... It's hidden in the hearts of God's people.

When Jesus began His ministry in Galilee, Mark 1 tells us His message, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand". Of course, Jesus pointed to no palaces. He carried no flag. He sat on no throne. He never marched in front of an army – but Jesus had begun to build a spiritual kingdom. In one sense, "Jesus was the kingdom of God in person."

When Jesus returns a second time, He'll be crowned, "King of kings and Lord of lords." But today Jesus is *the King of Hearts*. He rules over people. This is why Jesus said in Luke 17, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." It's spiritual. Before Jesus rules over *institutions*, He rules over *individuals*. Before He occupies *halls of power*, He occupies the *hearts of people*. Today, God's kingdom comes when people come under the sway of King Jesus, bow to His will, and allow His grace to transform their world.

Author Phillip Ryken writes to explain God's kingdom, "It's a kingdom of the heart. It is not a territory. It is not a party politic. It is not a nation-state with geographic borders. The kingdom of God is simply the rule of God." To pray "Your kingdom come" is not only to look forward to a day yet future, but it's to ask Jesus to reign right now over *our marriages, our families, our work, our emotions, our play, our thoughts, our money*... It's to pray, "Lord, permeate *all of my life with your love and truth!*" Author Max Lucado puts it, "When you say, "Thy kingdom come"... you are inviting the Messiah Himself to walk into your world... Take your throne in our land. Be present in my heart. Be present in my office. Come into my marriage. Be Lord of my family, fears, and doubts. This is no feeble request; it's a bold appeal for God to occupy every corner of your life."

When I think of what God is doing in the world today, I recall a dad who woke early one Saturday morning. His family was still in bed. He wanted just a few minutes to himself, to read the newspaper, and enjoy a cup of coffee. It was 6:00 AM, but his 5 year-old daughter decided to join him. The father pleaded, "Honey, go back to bed. It's not time to wake up yet." But the little girl just couldn't. She was ready to greet the weekend. Finally, the dad opted for a distraction. He ripped out a full page picture of the Earth from the newspaper – and tore it into pieces. The man handed his daughter the scraps, and a roll of scotch tape. He said, "Honey, I want you to go into the den, and see if you can put the world back together."

It took just a few minutes before she returned with the task completed. The daughter showed her daddy the taped up picture. He was stunned. He asked how she was able to put the world back together so quickly? That's when she turned the page over. On the back was the picture of a man. She didn't know a lot of geography, but she knew the shape of a man. She said, "When you make the man right, you make the world right." This is what God is doing today – He's making the world right one man at a time. I like what JI Packer writes of our text, "To pray 'thy kingdom come' is searching and demanding, for one must be ready to add, 'and start with me; make me Your fully obedient subject.'" Are you and I willing to live under the sway of Jesus? Are we willing to allow Him to put back together the broken pieces of our lives, and make us into what He desires for us to be?

As Christians the Bible tells us we are citizens of heaven living on earth. Paul calls us "ambassadors for Christ." We're *divine diplomats*. We're spokespeople for the *Kingdom of God* living among the *kingdoms of men*. When people walk into our assembly they should get a little taste of heaven. *By how we live... by what we believe... by how we treat one another...* Jesus wants you and I to bring a little bit of heaven to earth.

When George Shultz served as Secretary of State he kept a large globe in his office. When meeting with US ambassadors he'd always quiz them. He would tell them to walk to the globe, and point to their country. Invariably, they'd pick the nation to which they'd been sent. And Shultz would give them a lesson in diplomacy... He would correct them, and point to the United States. Shultz wanted the ambassador to never forget the land where he lives is not his home. His home is the land that he represents. And the same is true for "an ambassador for Christ." We're citizens of God's kingdom dispatched to this world.

There was an old Christian comedy group called *Isaac Air Freight*. They did a skit they called “King Me”. *King Me* was a man whose life was all about his own kingdom - *with no regard to the welfare of anyone else*. Poor *King Me* ended up lonely and miserable. He alienated the people he loved. He got all he wanted, but it didn't satisfy. Spiritually, he died a pauper. Jesus doesn't us to be a “*King Me*.” Real joy results not from *building* your kingdom, but by *bowing* to His... by praying, “*Your will be done.*”

Verse 10 is the bridge in the Lord's Prayer... Before it, we prayed, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” Prayer begins with God - we embrace Him as a Father who knows best. We approach God respectfully. After verse 10, we petition God... “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” We ask for *provision, pardon, and protection*... The Prayer starts with praise, and flows into petition. But sandwiched between *God's greatness* and *our neediness* is the essence of prayer... *We want God's kingdom to come. His will to be done.*

Most people mistake prayer as a means of getting what they want done. They try to use God to further their ambition, or make their own life easier. God ends up their servant, rather than vice versa. Trust me, God will never allow Himself to be used to build up another man's kingdom. We pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Before we ask God for a nickel, He expects us to bow to His authority. Always remember the bridge between praise and petition is surrender, humility, and a commitment to live for His kingdom – in pursuit of His will.

In John 14:13 Jesus promises, “Whatever you ask in My name that I will do...” And people want to stop there. They expect God to cater to their every whim. But the verse continues, “that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” The promise of Jesus assumes that *you've bowed to Him. You're all about His name, and nature, and glory... His desires are your desires*. In heaven when God says “Jump”, the angels say, “How high?” Obedience is immediate and thorough... And when that becomes our attitude, then we can pray for whatever we want and God will do it for us.

John Wesley once wrote a prayer I hope to mimic... “I am no longer my own, but Yours... Put me to what You will. Rank me with whom You will... Put me to doing, put me to suffering... Let me be employed for You, or laid aside for You... Exalted for You, or brought low for You... Let me be full, let me be empty... Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal.” Here's a life fully devoted to God. And this is why verse 10 is at the heart of the Lord's Prayer. “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” This is true prayer – *the cry of a heart sold out to God.*

In America, tomorrow is Independence Day. We celebrate the founding of our nation, and the freedoms we enjoy. But I hope you know the greatest type of freedom is freedom from sin, and selfishness, and pride. It's better to live under a tyrannical dictator in this life, than to live forever in a *cell* of sin, and the *hell* that follows. Sin enslaves us. It turns life into a cage. Pleasures that once tickled - now entrap and torment. Pride and the sin that goes with it, rips us off, and drags down, and degrade us. Build your own kingdom, and you'll become the proud ruler over sand castles. You'll wake up one day having spent your one and only life on what looks so impressive, yet gets washed away in the first high tide. A missionary once said, “Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that really doesn't matter.” In the end the only pursuit that will matter is building up God's Kingdom and doing His will.

This July 4<sup>th</sup>, I want to remind us, that though we're American citizens, first and foremost we're citizens of heaven. *And this presents a challenge*... True patriotism pledges allegiance to a country, but not to the exclusion of God. It's a loyalty on earth, but it refuses to ascribe absolute loyalty to anything earthly. It recalls that the kingdoms of man are all passing away. Our unrestricted love and devotion belongs only to God. We stand for what's *pure, and right, and true* – not just what's *red, and white, and blue*.

I want to close with a patriotic song, written by a British ambassador. It's original title was “*Two Fatherlands*.” It speaks of a loyalty to two countries. The first stanza speaks of England. The last stanza is about Heaven. “I vow to thee my country, all earthly things above. Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love. The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test. That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best. The love that never falters, the love that pays the price. The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice. *And there's another country, I've heard of long ago. Most dear to*

*them that love her, most great to them that know. We may not count her armies, we may not see her King. Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering. And soul by soul and silently, her shining bounds increase. And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.”*

On this Fourth of July, let's pledge ourselves anew to live as patriots of both our countries - as *Great Americans* and as *Committed Christians*!