

I want to begin today by making a confession: Some of you already know this, but I am a huge Blue Jays fan, and I mean huge. I have been a fan since I was a kid, both my grandmothers inculcated me into Jays fandom from a young age, but I have been a truly devoted fan for the past 15 years or so. I watch a lot of Blue Jays games, I know and enjoy the minutiae of obscure baseball statistics and have even begun – successfully I might add – the process of turning my daughters into avid Blue Jays fans. Knowing this you can probably imagine the difficulty I have had this week, in staying focused – staying focused at work, staying focused on this sermon etc. I have after all been waiting my whole adult life as a fan of the Blue Jays for their first taste of playoff baseball, and so I have been rather caught up in the excitement and emotion of being a fan of this truly great Blue Jays team this year. It has been a bit of a rollercoaster of both excitement and now disappointment as we come to the elimination game tonight. My mind has essentially been in two completely different places this week, it has been longing for the blue seats of the Sky Dome, the roar of the crowd and it has been uneasily dwelling in the Lord’s Prayer, dwelling particularly in the line of the prayer that we will be focusing on today “Your Kingdom Come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” My focus, my attention, even my loyalty has been so divided this week, that it was initially difficult to begin engaging with the Lord’s Prayer and with our Scripture passage today, after all there is seemingly very little in common between the Blue Jays and Kingdom of God, as much as I’d like there to be. This week it has honestly been hard for me to pray with integrity, “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”, because if it was up to me all I would be doing this week would be revelling in the Blue Jays first playoff appearance in a generation; my will is about as far from God’s will at the moment.

And I think this is exactly why Jesus gives us this prayer and why this petition is an important part of the Lord’s Prayer. Obedience is difficult, it is natural part of our culture to bristle against obedience and I think it is a result of the power of sin that our wills are often not aligned with the will of God. We like the way we see the world, we like to determine what matters to us, we like to have hobbies that can consume us and on and on. And let me just say, God wants us to have passions and loves, God wants us to enjoy ourselves and experience the fullness of the world he has created – there is nothing wrong with enjoying being a Blue Jays fan. However, where we begin to get into trouble, where I have been struggling this week, is when our wills take precedence over God’s will, when our view of what the world should or shouldn’t be takes precedence over God’s Kingdom, when we insist upon being Lord instead of recognizing God’s reign inaugurated in Jesus Christ. As we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we must be aware what we are praying, we are praying that God’s will be done, and not our own; we are praying that God’s kingdom will come and not our own. The Lord’s Prayer reminds us day in and day out that being children of God, reminds us that following Jesus does take submission and obedience to something greater than ourselves, that it is not an easy or comfortable road to walk. When we say thy kingdom come, we are saying just as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane “not my will, but your will be done.” This week as I have experienced the highs and lows of being a Blue Jays fan, I have been starkly reminded that my priorities need to be constantly re-evaluated and reordered, I have been reminded that when I pray “Your kingdom come, your will be done,” I am praying something that should have a deep impact on my life. If this truly is the family prayer of God’s family, then we are invited into something far larger than ourselves, we are invited into the coming fullness of the Kingdom of God, here as it is in heaven. And so every time we pray this prayer we must think about our priorities, we must think about what it is that takes precedence in our lives, is it God’s will or our own? When we pray thy kingdom come, we are declaring our allegiance to God, we are praying that his Kingdom might come to its fullness here on earth.

But the question still remains what does this kingdom look like, what are we praying for when we pray to God that His kingdom might come, on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus talked a lot about the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus’ first public act is to declare that the Kingdom of God was at hand. In his ministry of healing and signs and wonders Jesus declared that the Kingdom was breaking into the world. Much of his teaching with parables was centred on the qualities of the kingdom of God. In our Gospel passage today, we hear two of these parables that Jesus used to describe the Kingdom, that give some insight into what it means your kingdom come, your will be done.

The first parable is the parable of the mustard seed, a parable that you will be familiar with if you have been in church before. The parable can become so familiar to us, that the impact of the parable can be lost. We are so accustomed to hearing the Kingdom of God described as a mustard seed that it is normal for us, but for first century Jews in Palestine, this would have been a completely topsy-turvy description of the Kingdom of God. To them the Kingdom of God was usually described as the great and grand cedars of Lebanon, kings among

trees in the Middle East. The Israelites of Jesus' day expected the Kingdom of God to come with power and great glory, they expected a cosmic Messiah, or a mighty military King to come and restore Israel to greatness, to establish God's Kingdom forever. For Jesus to use the lowly mustard seed as an image to describe the Kingdom, would have been unprecedented and unexpected. People expected the grandness of Cedars of Lebanon, not the humility and simplicity of the mustard tree. People expected the powerful Messiah, not the humility and disgrace of a Messiah hanging from a cross. This parable tells us that the Kingdom of God, is not what we expect, it does not look like the kingdoms and powers of this world, and in fact the Kingdom of God has a completely different set of values than the world – a fact that is reiterated in Jesus' teaching about the narrow door at the end of our passage. Up is down, and down is up. The last will be first and the first will be last.

For us to pray "Your Kingdom Come, Your Will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is to pray that we might be aligned with God's values, that our lives and the world around us might be transformed into the this topsy-turvy vision of the world. As we pray, we are asking God to bring comfort to those who suffer, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked. As we pray this prayer we are asking for God's justice to reign on earth, in fact we are calling out in hope for the reign of God to extend into every corner of the world. Jesus consistently declared justice for the poor and marginalized, he consistently sought to bring those outside into community. God's kingdom is marked by concern for the least of these, and as we pray this prayer week in and week out, we are praying that we too might see with God's eyes, that we might be a community where the reign of God is demonstrated, where the poor, the hungry, the marginalized find a place at the table, where everyone who is lost can be found, where all of us can encounter this strange and mysterious saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Kingdom of God has broken into this world; it broke into this world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but we know that it is not yet fully present, we know that there is still sin and death in this world. The fullness of the Kingdom of God is yet to come, and in God's time it will extend on earth just as it does in heaven. As we wait for the consummation of God's Kingdom we are invited to share in the works of the Kingdom. The second parable in our Gospel passage alludes to this, and alludes to how the Kingdom impacts the world. In the second parable of the passage, Jesus likens the Kingdom of God to yeast that a woman has mixed into three measures of flour and the whole mixture was leavened. The Kingdom of God, is like the yeast which when mixed into the flour is invisible, imperceptible to the naked eye but which causes an impact on the whole mixture. Without the yeast, there is only flour, there is no bread. The Kingdom of God, like the yeast in the parable, is so often invisible to the naked eye, it so often appears to be too small to make an impact on the world around it; but like the yeast the Kingdom of God will expand and impact all of creation, the Kingdom of God will change the world, and we are invited to participate in that. As we pray the Lord's Prayer, as we pray 'Your Kingdom come, your will be done,' we are invited to become agents of the Kingdom, to become the answer to our prayers. As we pray for justice, we are called to be bringers of justice. As we pray for the poor, hungry, thirsty and naked we are called to care for them ourselves, we are called to share the riches of the gifts we have received with those who are on the margins of society. As we pray for the sick and suffering, we are called to bring comfort and healing. As we pray this prayer we cannot stand idly by, we are not bystanders in the coming of God's Kingdom, we have the great privilege of being invited into the work of the Kingdom, the work of love, justice and mercy. Like the yeast which leavens the whole mixture, the Kingdom of God will change the world, that is a given; the question at hand is whether we will choose to be part of this kingdom, whether we will accept God's reign in our hearts, our lives, and within our community.

Our prayer is fulfilled when our lives are changed; when our priorities are reorganized and reoriented; when we, in hope, become agents of the Kingdom, witnesses and ambassadors bringing news of God's wondrous reign on earth as it is in heaven. As exciting and as enthralling as the Blue Jays have been for me this season, worldly glory will always disappoint, even in the now unlikely event the Blue Jays were to win it all this year, there is always next year, there is always disappointment waiting around the corner. The glory of this world fades but the Kingdom of God is far more beautiful, far more exhilarating than anything this world can offer. We are invited each and every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, to reorient and reorder our priorities, we are invited over and over again to see with hope the Kingdom of God breaking into this world, we are invited each and every time we say this prayer to embrace the will of God, to embrace his reign of mercy, justice and love and to share that with the world around us, by word and by deed. As we do that, the world, like the leaven and flour in the parable, is changed forever. Thanks be to God, Amen.