



PRAYING AND LIVING
THE KINGDOM

THY KINGDOM COME

Prayer Journal 2023

*Written by
Various Contributors*

Thy Kingdom Come: Prayer Journal
(Written by various contributors)
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Introduction

Thy Kingdom Come is a worldwide prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost.

Since its launch by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2016, Christians from 172 countries and over 100 denominations have taken part in praying for friends and family to come to faith in Jesus Christ. These days have always been full of expectation and anticipation.

As the Lord Jesus ascended, He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable the disciples to be witnesses. As they waited for the promise to be fulfilled they devoted themselves constantly to prayer (Acts 1:14). So, the renewed call across the church is to set these days apart to pray, and each individual to pray for 5 people to come to know the love and peace of Jesus Christ.

Below is space to write the names of five people that you will be praying for throughout Thy Kingdom Come.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

We are delighted that this year's Prayer Journal features contributions from a range of voices across different denominations and traditions.

Thy Kingdom Come always focuses on praying for people to know the love of God in Jesus Christ for themselves.

However, this year, we are also encouraging people to consider taking a step further, to go the extra mile, to love and serve the needs of those you are praying for or others who are in need- 'Living the Kingdom.'

Each day there is a passage from the Bible, a short reflection, a time to pause and pray, and a 'Living the Kingdom' action. There is also space each day for your own notes.

Did a phrase jump out at you? Did God bring something to your mind as you prayed that day? When you tried to take action, how did it go? Make a note so that you can remember what God has been saying to you through your reading, your prayers, and your actions.



Day 1 - *Ascension Day*

The Reverend Canon Chris Russell

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Adviser for Evangelism and Witness, Church of England

‘... lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.’

Luke 24:50-51 (NRSV)

Reflection

I am convinced that society's greatest plague is isolation and loneliness. Even in the middle of a crowd we feel alone, and our social media obsessions are attempts to bring us company.

Matthew begins his gospel with the good news that God hasn't left us on our own, but has come as 'Emmanuel' – God with us. What is astonishing then, is that Ascension Day – the day Jesus physically leaves this world and is taken into heaven – isn't a day of mourning.

If God has taken flesh in Christ, why do we not grieve that He is not with us in bodily form? Luke shows us in his telling of the Ascension. Notice Jesus' actions as He is taken from them – 'He lifted up his hands and blessed them.' Think of these hands. They are scarred from nails. The hands that bless us are hands that bear wounds of love. And this blessing doesn't

end, for as Jesus is taken from them, Luke tells us He continues to bless them.

Ascension isn't a day of grieving because Jesus continues to bless – the blessing doesn't stop just because He isn't physically present. After all Jesus said it was good for the disciples that He was going.

We are continually blessed because He sends us the promised Holy Spirit – His presence once again in the world. And He blesses us that we might bless Him and pass that blessing onto others. Especially those five you have named before Him. God desires to bless them most probably through you.

We begin the journey through Thy Kingdom Come by receiving God's blessing – so we might bless Him and in turn bless others.



Pause and pray

Take time to pray for your five people – whether they be family, friends or neighbours – that they may encounter God’s love and experience His blessings.

'Living the Kingdom' Action

How can your hands bring God’s blessing to another person today?

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Day 2 - Loves

The Rt Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin

Bishop of Dover, Church of England

‘For God so loved the world
that He gave His only begotten Son
that whosoever believeth in Him
should not perish but have everlasting life.’

John 3:16 (KJV)

Reflection

One of the first Bible verses that I learnt by memory as a young girl growing up in Jamaica at Sunday school was John 3:16 – ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’ (KJV). I was given a little star for having learnt it, but little did I realise how much these words would become truly life-giving for me. In being taught the faith, I learnt about a great big God. And I even sang the songs that acted as a reminder: ‘My God is so big so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing my God cannot do...’

Growing up, it was this God that I turned to in difficult circumstances. I recall

thinking how come this Great big God is interested in me? In fact, not only did He love me, but He gave something so precious to Him to show His love for me – His Son. This was not just words on a paper. I had witnessed this tender love through the people in my local church who became my ‘adopted parents.’ Their love was unconditional and, through them, I knew the unconditional love of God. I never looked back! I committed my life to living generously, to reflecting God’s love so that others could know how loved they are – and all this is undergirded by prayer, by communication with that huge, loving God.

Day 3 - *Speaks*

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

‘At many moments in the past and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our time, the final days, He has spoken to us in the person of His Son.’

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NJB)

Reflection

The opening words of the Letter to the Hebrews are so clear. Yes, God speaks to us constantly, but God’s definitive word to us is Christ Jesus.

Our constant calling, then, is to set ourselves close to Him, to enshrine Him in our hearts. Our relationship to Him is the foundation of our lives and the source of our strength and hope. Without proximity to Him our life of faith loses its heart.

During this Thy Kingdom Come season, let’s renew this best relationship of all and our sense of mission.

Here is one aspect of our mission: that in every circumstance, whether at home or school, at work or leisure, we strive to be

‘a bond of connection between persons’ – in the lovely phrase of St John Henry Newman. Building for others a sense of being accepted is a genuine first expression of the life that Jesus brings. We put faith into practice when we recognise and respect the image of God in every person we meet and strive, however simply, to reach out to them. Can our actions echo the truth of Jesus’ words: ‘Come to me all you who are over-burdened, and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11.28)? Building community, breaking down hostilities: this is the work of our Blessed Lord, so much needed in our troubled world.

Our mission is to be builders, day by day, of this acceptance and unity.

Day 4 - Creates

Dr Lisa Adjei

*Church Relationships Manager, Christian Aid
& Member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*

‘God called the dry ground "land",
and the gathered waters He called "seas".
And God saw that it was good.’

Genesis 1:10 (NIV)

Reflection

The Bible begins with introducing us to a God who creates. This is one of the first things we learn about God. It isn't the 613 laws handed to Moses or the type of fabric the priests needed to make their tunics with. The first thing we learn is that God creates. 'Bara' in Hebrew points to the action of creating; it's believed that this verb is only used in relation to God. I believe that the way God creates is not like us; He is able to create something out of nothing. In many nations around the world, God is known, called, and referred to as Creator.

Genesis 1:10 ends with three powerful words, 'it was good.' This is mentioned five times throughout the first chapter of Genesis. 'It was good.' We see clearly God's stamp of approval over all of

creation. We must remember this isn't just over the human race, but over every aspect of creation. All of it is good. The Hebrew word for good is 'tov' and 'the original hearers would have understood tov to refer to the goodness of the ties and relationships between things in creation' – Lisa Sharon Harper. Everything was in right relationship with each other. Between people, the land, animals, and God too. In the Kingdom of God, we look back towards tov, towards creative goodness; remembering that we are not independent of the world around us, but stewards of this good planet we share together. We are invited to walk with our Father to change things now as we look in expectant hope to the heavenly city which is ours in Christ.



Pause and pray

As you pray for your five people today, give thanks to God for how He has created them.

'Living the Kingdom' Action

In what small way could we practically show love and care for God's creation, both people and planet, today?

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Day 5 - Gives

Bishop Mike Royal

General Secretary, Churches Together in England

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.'

Acts 2:42-47 (NRSV)

Reflection

As Christians we know Pentecost as the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Church, but 2000 years ago it was known as the Jewish festival celebrating the ingathering of the first fruits of harvest. It was a festival that attracted people from all over the known world to Jerusalem: a beautiful movement of unity in diversity – displaying God's great abundance in the diversity of peoples, languages, food, and cultures. It is on that day, on those gathered people that the Holy Spirit was poured out, so all may hear of Jesus.

That day, Acts tells many were saved and they lived out their new unity in Jesus as they broke bread, prayed, worshipped together, shared everything they had and provided for those in need.

What incredible generosity – meeting both the spiritual and material needs of the people! The Church channeled the

generosity of God and demonstrated His sacrificial love in their life together.

Today, all over the world, churches are meeting people at their point of need in practical life-changing ways: providing warm hubs in cold cities, food banks for those struggling with the cost of living, help with starting micro-businesses, and reaching out to young people who feel society has nothing for them.

It isn't always easy to preach and practise, to share and serve, to speak out for those who are disadvantaged or marginalised; but when we commit to showing the good news in words and actions, by the power of the Holy Spirit, there is a glorious witness to the truth of Jesus. By ourselves, we run out of strength, patience, or determination; but as we pray 'Come Holy Spirit' we are open to His abundant life and love, which makes the impossible possible!



Pause and pray

Take time to pause and pray for your five people, that they will come to know and experience God's abundant love.

'Living the Kingdom' Action

In what acts of sharing and serving might God be calling you to demonstrate His abundant love and practical care during Thy Kingdom Come?

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Day 6 - Walks with us

Hea Woo*

*Former prisoner in China & North Korea
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‘So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed,
for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.’

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

Reflection

One day, when I was in a prison in China before being sent back to North Korea, I knew the Lord’s Day (Sunday) was coming. I wanted to worship God, so I prayed for a miracle that other Christians and I could worship on the Lord’s Day. But the soldiers were keeping their eyes on us 24 hours a day.

The morning of the Lord’s Day, soldiers came to my room and called out some names. We all knew that they do not send prisoners back to North Korea on Sundays. There were about 50 people in the room, but when the calling was done, only four women including me were left. The other three were the ones who I evangelised in the prison secretly.

Hallelujah! My Lord heard my prayer and showed His miracle to us. Avoiding the soldiers’ eyes, we worshipped the Lord in Spirit and truth. Even though much time has passed since then, I cannot forget the joy of that day.

Though we were afraid of what would happen in North Korea, we could sing and get comfort and power from the Lord and give thanks to the Lord who was with us in this difficult time.

**Hea Woo (pseudonym) was imprisoned in China and North Korea for many years, but she didn’t give up her faith, leading other prisoners to Jesus.*



Pause and pray

Take time to pause and pray today for your five people – that God will make Himself known to them in whatever situations they may find themselves in.

'Living the Kingdom' Action

Pray especially during your day today for those living in countries where the Church is at risk of persecution. Pray that they will sense God's loving presence strengthening them.

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Day 7 - *Listens*

Emma Buchan

*Former Thy Kingdom Come Project Director,
Co-Director, Churches & Networks (Vision & Strategy Team), Church of England*

‘O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.’

Psalm 139: 1, 2, 4 (NRSV)

Reflection

In Psalm 139 we hear how God knows everything about us; He knows our thoughts before we have them, He knows our words before we speak them, and knows more about us than we do ourselves. This is why we can have utter confidence that He hears all of our prayers.

God has answered so many prayers in my life, when I have walked closely and when, sadly, I have walked away. I remember when I was 18 nearly 19, a feisty, independent city girl working for a big oil company with a fabulous job and an even more fabulous fiancé, my life felt pretty sorted. Then things started to come crashing down; within a week my fiancé and I split up, we had a sudden family trauma with two deaths within two days, and one of them was my beloved grandma, (my grandma who always prayed a special prayer with me that I still pray every night with my children).

Whilst in the hospital I was really struggling and my father asked me to be strong for him – but I didn’t have any strength to give – I fully understood, it was his mum, she was dying. I stumbled across the hospital chapel, entered, knelt, and prayed. I prayed that if God was there, He would help, give me strength, that I was sorry that I had ignored Him for a long time but right here I couldn’t do this without Him. And He gave me a strength that was beyond myself, and I was able to be supportive to those I loved so dearly through the darkest of days. He didn’t heal my grandma but he carried me through.

And that was the biggest turning point for me in my life; the God of everything breaking through as I turned to Him. He had heard my cries and, as Bishop Michael Curry says, it changed the equation of the moment.

Pause and pray

Take time to pray for your five people – that they will turn to God in prayer, that they will know His love and that He is always with them.

'Living the Kingdom' Action

Can you share with your five friends that you are praying for them and that God always hears their prayers?



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Day 8 - Saves

Commissioner Anthony Cotterill

The Salvation Army UK & Ireland

‘... He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.’

Titus 3:5 (NRSV)

Reflection

‘It does exactly what it says on the tin’ is one of the most successful slogans in UK advertising history – the statement is now used way beyond preserving wood! Colloquially it means, of course, that the name of something is an accurate description of its qualities.

What an amazing, beautiful name is ‘Jesus’! Joseph was told that he must call the baby ‘Jesus’, ‘because He will save His people from their sins.’ (Matthew 1:21) The name Jesus literally means ‘Saviour’ – and He does exactly what it says, written not on the tin, but written on the heart of God.

In the centuries before this Saviour was born, there were so many indications that Father God is one who saves

(e.g. 1 Chronicles 16:35; Psalm 40:13). However, with the arrival, life, and death of Jesus, our experience of the God who saves us from sin and its consequences is taken to a new level.

For sure, we cannot save ourselves! Paul explained, ‘He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.’ (Titus 3:5) Our cooperation, however, is vital. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.’ (1 John 1:9)

He is the God who saves us!



Pause and pray

Pause and pray for your five people, that they will come to know the saving love of God.

'Living the Kingdom' Action

Read Psalm 40 (or another of your choice) and join in praise to the God who saves. 'Mighty to save' is a great song. You can find it at: <https://youtu.be/-HLVnPjbSal>

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Day 9 - *Encourages*

His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos

Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London and Papal Legate to the United Kingdom

‘So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed,
for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you
with my righteous right hand.’

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

Reflection

Our world today is increasingly taxing on the emotions and wellbeing of everyone. We are caught in the seemingly never-ending treadmill of life and many demands on our attention. It is hard not to become disheartened when we read about the struggles of so many around the world. We are burdened by the stories of those who fight for their existence and basic God-given rights and freedoms. When we add the struggles faced by so many now in the United Kingdom and beyond, in the ongoing economic crisis and political instability, we are often disheartened. Yet struggles are nothing new for humanity – darkness, tribulation, and conflict have existed since the early chapters of Genesis, when one brother killed the other.

Anxiety is high, especially in light of those who like to remind us that the end is near.

Yet we know from Scripture that no one, except the Father, knows when the end will come. Focusing on the unknown only increases our worries and concerns, and distracts us from the abundant life promised to us all by our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 41:10 we are encouraged not to fear, as God is with us to support and accompany us through life’s hardships. We are encouraged not to fear as God says to us ‘for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.’ When we think about what that means in practical terms, to have God ‘on our side,’ it automatically shifts our focus away from our problems, and towards the joy of partnership and friendship with an almighty, all-knowing, and all-loving God and Father.

Day 10 - *Empowers*

The Reverend Canon Helen Cameron

*Methodist Church of Great Britain & Moderator of the Free Churches
Group President, Churches Together in England*

Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord;
let it be with me according to your word.'

Luke 1: 38 (NRSV)

Reflection

When Mary shares her joy at being trusted by God to bear Jesus in her very body and to bring him to birth, she does so in a way we can all share and be a part of. Her joyful expression and appreciation of a God who trusts her, accepts her offering, her 'Yes' signals to all of us that each of us too are wanted and needed as part of God's plan. God gladly takes the ordinariness of our lives and our very selves. God then blesses what we give and through grace works in us, and our lives, something extraordinary.

When we say 'Yes' to God, we are lifted up in and through our relationship with God, not kept in our place. God empowers us to be the people God always

intended us to be when God made us. In Christ we are redeemed and transformed. The old labels of loser and winner, success and failure, powerful and insignificant no longer apply or have any validity. We are, as the people of God, called to be the friends of God. We are called to be those who know they belong, because we are known by name and loved generously. We are seen clearly and valued immensely by God who empowers and lifts us up. With this knowledge comes a gracious invitation to us as the friends of God to be those who nurture others, especially to see those who are ignored and neglected by society. We are to pay attention to the world in the same loving way God pays attention to us.

Day 11 - Pentecost

Eleanor Mumford

Coordinator, Vineyard Churches International

‘... how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him!’

Luke 11:13 (NIV)

Reflection

I love the 'how much more' of Jesus and can almost hear the urgency and the longing in His emotionally-charged Aramaic voice.

It's not surprising that His disciples, and the larger crowd, hung on every word. The context in Luke 11 sees Jesus responding to the disciples' request 'Lord, teach us to pray.' Here, in verse 11 He gives it to them straight. Would they give their own children a snake when they asked them for fish, or a scorpion when they wanted an egg? No, of course not. They would give their children what they needed. Let us then imagine the impassioned and deeply-felt emotion in His voice as He delivered this wonderful, hammer-blow line... 'how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him?' The implication is 'if only you knew' as He said to the Samaritan woman in John 4.

Jesus knew so well that the answer to our prayers for the Holy Spirit is to experience His power. His very last words to His followers on the brink of His Ascension and in anticipation of Pentecost was that

they would receive the 'how much more,' the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit would edify and encourage, to enable and equip for ministry and mission.

The central motif of all Jesus' teaching was the Kingdom of God, the breaking-in of the rule and reign of God on the earth. Jesus doesn't just announce the Kingdom of God, in Him the Kingdom of God arrives. Many are healed, the hungry are fed, the lost are found. But while the Kingdom has begun, it is not fully here – God's world is still characterised by pain, injustice, and death. There is the magnificence of its triumphs alongside the mystery of its tragedies. The promise of Acts 1:8 was that we would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to witness to Jesus and God's Kingdom. From one end of the earth to the other.

Even though the Kingdom is only partially here, we long for its full coming, and in the meantime rely on the 'how much more' of the Father who gives the Spirit to all who ask.

Join the global wave of prayer:
www.thykingdomcome.global

