

Reoriented: "Thy kingdom come"

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Week after week, day after day, Christians pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." But the kingdom doesn't come. If heaven stands for the realm where God's shalom reigns fully and freely, then the gap between heaven and earth never closes, and at times it only seems to widen.

These days, we look around and see decades of hostility between Israel and Palestinians erupting once more in a deadly conflict in the midst of a civilian population. We see how greed and outright malfeasance on Wall Street and Main Street have led to an economic meltdown and suffering around the world. As always, it is the people at the bottom rungs of the economic ladder who suffer the most from these catastrophes. New evidence is showing that the U.S. has, despite its public disavowals, tortured suspects in the war on terrorism. Susan Crawford, a top official overseeing military trials, revealed in the waning days of the Bush administration that, in her view, the "advanced interrogation techniques" used on a Saudi man in 2002 constituted torture—which is why the man's case could not be prosecuted.

If praying "thy kingdom come" is to have any integrity, it must start as lament—lament for the gap between God's realm of peace and justice and reality as we know it. The prayer is a cry for a different kind of world. It is an expression of our deepest longings for a time when God's peace and justice and righteousness will prevail.

The Lord's Prayer is not about us, however, but about God. *Thy kingdom come*. To pray this prayer is to orient our lives toward God and not ourselves, toward God's will and not our own. The prayer is a way of stating our allegiance to God rather than to the political, economic or cultural powers of this world. We pray for the wisdom to see where God's reign is already breaking into this world and for the courage and strength to align ourselves with it.

To pray "thy kingdom come" is finally a confession: we acknowledge that the gap which exists between heaven and earth runs right through our own lives and through the communities of believers who claim to follow Jesus. For this reason, we need the rest of the prayer: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against

us.”