

In Jesus' name. Amen.

People loved by God,

The 2nd Petition implores the almighty Father, **Thy Kingdom come.**

And as Luther points out in the explanation:

*The kingdom of God certainly comes of itself without our prayer,
but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.*

Think of that... The Father sends out His Kingdom, even without our asking or desiring it. He just sends out the invitation to His kingdom because He wants you in it, that His house may be full.

And just as gracious as the invitation into the kingdom is,
so is the mysteriousness of how its gates were opened to us:
through the faithless Jewish counsel and High Priest and the weak and belligerent Roman gov't.

Leading up to our text for meditation, Pontius Pilate was frustrated with the Jews standing before him. He knew Jesus was innocent... had declared it publicly 3 times... but still they wanted Him crucified. So, in a last-ditch-effort, Pilate had Jesus sent back to his soldiers to be punished,
in hopes that the people would have pity on Him and let Him go, rather than crucify Him. Our text is recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27, beginning at the 27th verse...

...as follows in Jesus' name:

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to crucify Him. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

There was no love lost between the Roman soldiers and the rebellious Jewish nation. So when Jesus was brought into the headquarters with the charge that He was "King of the Jews," they decided to have a little fun, not only mocking Jesus, but also scorning the Jews.

And they were pretty creative...

Can you picture the mockery from this battalion of soldiers as it escalated.

I can see the first guy (after Jesus was stripped and sat down before them) say, "A king, ehe?" and then mocks, "Oh! Well! He needs a proper crown then," and searches for the thorns...

not only, a symbol of scorn, but an instrument of torture as he pressed it down to make it stick. And seeing the crown, another went and found an old tattered scarlet cloth and draped it over him. And there He sat, among them naked and exposed, draped only by that fabric that would adhere to his coagulating blood and be removed, only to reopen any healing wounds. And then came along the idea of the feeble reed, ridiculing the powerlessness of His Jewish reign. And having now dressed Him properly for the role, they complete the scene by paying homage, hailing Him, not only with a bended knee in false tribute, but hailing down blows on Him. They then take His "scepter" and beat him on the head with it, impressing the crown even further. How... clever...

What we see here is our human arrogance and our grasp on what we *think* is power.

As the Roman soldiers abused Jesus, they thought they were exhibiting superior power over Him.

For them, portraying strength was essential.

Humility was a sign of weakness... a fault / a defect.

And we can understand them, can't we?

As much as we hate pride in others, and rather expect that they should show some humility.

That temptation to flex is so powerful in us because that is the currency of this world. - Power.

That is what worldly rulers understand.

Maneuvering... poisoning themselves to appear powerful...

Or simply dominating the scene by sheer force/training/technology/strategy, or all of the above.

But it isn't just on the world scene. It's what's in each of our homes, work places, communities...

And it feels good to be the powerful one, doesn't it?

Displays of superior power produce fear... and fear makes it easier to manipulate others.

And if you can manipulate them, you get what you want... despite what they truly want.

...

But is power the currency of God? Is that what He delights in?

Does a display of strength have much purchase power with Him?

Is He swayed to listen to you because you are powerful, stronger, smarter, healthier?

Can you manipulate Him into doing what you want?

Consider also, how is it that God regularly chooses to interact with you?

Does He use great miracles to Wow you, or shows of power so that you believe in Him?

or great plagues to cause you to fear Him and so manipulate you into His kingdom?

Does He even just force you to believe in Him?

It is true, as we also pray, *For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever,*

and it's true that Jesus now has all authority in heaven and on earth given to Him,

and it's true that fear of earthly consequences, and physical death and God's judgment and hell

are all real things.

Someone looking into the Kingdom from the outside might convince himself that

your belief in God is a manipulated situation, that you are cowed into it by fear of punishment.

But then, why did Jesus, the Son of God, allow Himself to be beaten by His own weak creatures?

Why did He take the spitting, the scourging, the mocking, and the scorn?

Why did He endure the shame of crucifixion, if raw power could have fixed everything?

Instead, what do we see in Jesus, our king?

There is a quiet, humble strength, isn't there? It isn't a flaw or a defect.

He is not awed or cowed by the display of power from the soldiers.

Nor is He afraid. Not of what the soldiers will do to him, not even of the crucifixion or death.

In Him we see a quiet courage as He is **despised** and **rejected**... and stands alone. Is. 53:4

He stands firm as He is *stricken, smitten, and afflicted*, Is. 53:4; ELH #297

trusting that His heavenly Father will take care of Him through it all.

And it isn't as if He is ignorant of the power struggles.

He knows true power. He has true power and authority.

As He told Peter when He was being arrested, He could call down 12 legions of angels, ^{Matthew 26:53}
and as He told Pilate, if His kingdom were of this world, His servants would fight for Him. ^{John 18:36}
And yet, He did not... and He would not use His power to deliver Himself or scare His abusers,
because there was something greater going on.

...

The scene in our text is the coronation, if you will, of your King of Grace.

As He was enthroned on the cross of humility, He used His power to save you, to bear your sin:
your pride, your disdain for others you consider weaker (in strength, skill, thought) than yourself,
your attempts to manipulate them for your own personal gain.

Your gracious King spent His power to serve you in humility that He might win you over,
not by manipulation or coercion, but by persuasion and conviction,
not by fear or intimidation, but by a loving act of self-sacrifice,
not by a show of worldly power, but by a kind and gentle, yet powerful word: you are forgiven.

When we pray, "**Thy kingdom come,**"

you are praying to hear those words ("You are forgiven") again and again from the King of Grace...
you're praying that you might be present when they are said in the assembly of the righteous...
you're praying that He would continue to send His ministers to speak them to you in your time of need.
You're also praying that He would speak those words, His kind and gentle, yet powerful words,
to others: to your family, to your congregation, to your community, and throughout the world.

And so you're also praying that He would not only confirm your faith
but also conform your life to live according to His will,

as we learn "*to live a godly live here in time and hereafter in eternity...*"

and so you're also praying that He would use you to do those things
that would let His kingdom come to you and others,

that you would pray for the strength and growth of the Church, in general, and people in particular,
that you would support the ministry of the Word with your prayers, your offerings, and abilities,
that you would boldly and humbly confess your Savior and speak His kind and gentle,
yet powerful word to those in need around you.

So pray to your heavenly Father as children ask their dear father, "**Thy kingdom come.**"

It is a powerful prayer... a powerful petition, for it is the Lord's Prayer, His petition for you.

And then come and receive His powerful word,

and enjoy the Kingdom that He has prepared for you, both here in time and hereafter in eternity.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria