**Your Kingdom Come**

Text: Mark 4:26-29

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**Scriptures:** Daniel 4:28-37; Mark 4:1-29

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 99, 330, 97, 331, 530

**Series:** Heidelberg Catechism (LD48)

**Theme:** The growing Kingdom of God

**Proposition:** See the Kingdom of Heaven being established on earth and Worship God!

**Introduction**

We are living at a volatile, unsettled time in the history of this world. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused colossal changes to human health, living patterns, finances and also to the strength of different nations. The balance of power on the geo-political world stage is changing. In the opinion of columnist Damien Grant:

“America isn’t an empire in the Soviet or British sense, lacking direct colonial possessions, (however) it has acted and has been treated as the world’s reigning imperial power for 75 years. These days are coming to an end. For a small, vulnerable nation like New Zealand that has prospered under the wing of first the British and subsequently the American hegemony, these are dangerous times. For all of America’s many faults, a new world order dominated by Beijing, Moscow and Tehran is going to be considerably less agreeable than the one we have become used to, as the citizens of Hong Kong found out last month. We are entering a new global era”.

Historically this is nothing new, human empires only last for a time before they collapse. Thank about the Babylonian, Persian, Roman, Russian, English and North American ‘kingdoms’. Strictly speaking, a kingdom is the realm over which a King (or Queen) rules. The visible evidences of a kingdom are palaces, armies, courts, and tax-paying citizens.

The Kingdom of God may be defined as the “*realm over which God is acknowledged as King*”. In this sense, it is really no different in concept than a human kingdom. God’s domain, His kingdom, was present in Old Testament times: Israel was a nation ruled by God. The rulers of other kingdoms such as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon acknowledged the kingdom of the Most High God: Dan 4:34b “*His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation*” (Dan 4:34b).

However, unlike human kingdoms, the Kingdom of God broke into history in a radically new way with Christ. The King came to dwell amongst His people as a ruler like none other. He alone is gloriously ‘full of grace and truth’. The subject of the Kingdom of God is central in the preaching of Jesus. We read in Mark’s gospel that: ‘“*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*’ (Mark 1:4-15) The phrase “Kingdom of heaven” is the same in meaning as “Kingdom of God”. Both phrases are translations of the same Aramaic words of Jesus into Greek. There are over 100 references to the kingdom of God which appear in the gospels. Many of these occur in the parables of Jesus: e.g. the Kingdom of God is like a: farmer, yeast, treasure, a pearl merchant, a fishnet, an employer, a king inviting people to a marriage feast.

Here in Mark 4:26-29, the Kingdom is like a sown seed. This parable is only found in Mark’s gospel and follows on from the parable of the sower as we heard earlier. The focus or emphasis in this parable is on the supernatural growth of Kingdom through mechanisms unknown to the sower. The sower manually sows seed in a field, casting it upon the ground. He goes to bed and gets up. This pattern is repeated many times. The seed sprouts and grows. The sower has done nothing more than simply sow. The power for the seed to grow comes from elsewhere. Time passes and then the crop is ready for harvesting. Then the reapers come wielding hand-held, short handled, sickles. This parable helps us to understand what we are praying in the second request of the Lord’s Prayer: “Your Kingdom Come”.

1. **Sowing**

Everybody in the 1st century land of Israel would know about sowing. Nobody lived far from a growing field. Today more than half the world’s population live in urban areas, increasingly in high density cities. Many people have never sown a seed themselves. Yet the principle of sowing seed remains the same as it has always been. Look at verse 26 "*The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground*”. The sower manually sowed seed in a field, casting it upon the soil. There was no tractor, no seed-drill, no precise sowing lines, no accurate spacing in the days when Christ walked this earth. Sowing was a random action of scattering. In this parable the seed is not wheat or barley, but the Word of God (4:14). The seed is the proclamation of Christ with authority. When the Word of God is heard and received in the human heart, then the seed is sown.

The Kingdom of God has **already** come. Jesus said: *"The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (*Luke 17:20b-21*).* The seed of the gospel has been preached! The sovereign kingdom purposes of God will be achieved “*So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it*” (Isaiah 55:11).

The Kingdom of God is in our midst now:

1. In Christian homes where Christ the King is honoured.
2. In Christian organisations where decisions are made according to the King’s regulations e.g. rest homes- caring compassionately, comforting with the Word of God, schools – where all subjects are taught from a Christian worldview, aid agencies – where practical help is provided around the world in addition to the gospel being proclaimed by servants of Christ.
3. In the church were the seed of the Word is regularly sown. The church is central to the Kingdom. The church is the first fruits of the Kingdom (Rev 14:4). The church is included in the Kingdom. However, the church is not equal to the kingdom. The kingdom encompasses the whole creation.
4. The Kingdom of God is in our midst now in the hearts of believers, like you and me, brothers and sisters, who willingly submit to the rule of Christ our King. We find this truth expressed in Heidelberg Catechism A123 in identifying what the words “Your Kingdom Come” mean: “*rule us by your Word and Spirit”.*  After sowing, comes growing, which is our second point:
5. **Growing**

The reason why seed is sown is so that plants can grow. This growth is described in the parable in verses 27-28: “*He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear*”. The sower goes to bed and gets up. This pattern is repeated many times. The seed sprouts and grows to be a mature, fruit-bearing plant. Apart from sowing the seed, the sower has done nothing more. The power for growth does not come from him.

Today scientists understand the molecular biology, the cellular chemistry and the genetic pre-programming of seed growth. Yet still the process of growth is marvellous and wonderful- we cannot replicate it with our own technology, we can only tinker with and modify the life-forms which God has already created. The crop comes **spontaneously** from the sown seed. There is a **mystery** of the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11). The message of mysterious growth in this parable is that, although the preaching and teaching of God’s Word may seem fruitless: like a man randomly throwing small seeds about in a field, yet it is this very activity which eventually produces a crop, because the seed is powerful enough to germinate in the soil and to grow. Even though we can’t see this process within seed below the ground. It is not wise to underestimate the scattered seed because it is small.

Similarly, the Kingdom of God comes mysteriously by God’s initiative and appointment, without human intervention. God is sovereign in the establishment of His rule as King. The Lord Jesus Christ explained this deep truth when he said to Nicodemus: “*Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit*." *(John 3:7-8)* The Kingdom is the supernatural outworking of the Divine will. The Kingdom of God is growing and expanding according to the perfect purposes of the King.

Entry into the Kingdom of God does not come about through human action. It is a gift of God out of His sovereign good pleasure (Lk 12:32) Parents and grandparents and great-grandparents cannot save their own children. Brothers and sisters, we must all pray that God would sow the seed of His word in the hearts of those who are lost. Those in our family, in our church community and in the world. When we really understand the meaning of eternal separation from God, eternal damnation, and eternal death then we pray “Thy Kingdom Come” – expressing our desire that the lost would be saved.

We pray “Thy Kingdom Come” because the kingdom of God has **not yet** come in fullness. There are three aspects to this incompleteness of the kingdom:

**Firstly**, Brothers and sisters, whilst we are citizens of God’s Kingdom, we do not fully submit to His rule. When we pray “Thy Kingdom Come” we are saying (HC48): “*Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way that* ***more and more we submit to you***”.

**Secondly**, not all those whom God has chosen have been gathered into His kingdom. When we pray “Thy Kingdom Come” we are saying (HC48): “*Keep your church strong, and add to it*”. Brothers and sisters, when we serve in the church, we are used by God in the growth of His Kingdom. When we are actively involved in the ministries of the church. When we consciously seek to reach out to those on the ‘outside’.

**Thirdly**, the kingdom of darkness has not, as yet, been destroyed. When we pray “Thy Kingdom Come” we are saying (HC48): “*Destroy the devil's work; destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your Word*”. The church equips citizens of God’s kingdom with the armour they need to fight against the Devil as the Word of God is preached and the Holy Spirit applies that Word to the heart. This is the primary means through which the citizens of God’s Kingdom grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

When the growing is complete, the harvest comes, which brings us to our final point:

1. **Reaping**

Jesus concludes the parable of the growing seed with these words: "*But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come*." (v29) Time passes and the crop is ready for harvesting. Reapers come wielding hand-held, short handled, sickles. These tools had a long-curved blade, and were sharp on the inside edge. Whilst sickles are not used in commercial harvesting today and have been replaced with machines, the picture still clear: when the crop is ripe, it’s time to harvest. The point is that the harvest is certain, even though the sower has **not** been actively involved in the growing.

The harvest is an Old Testament metaphor for end of the age, for example “*put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their evil is great*” (Joel 3:13). Harvest time is a time of judgement as well as salvation. The dual nature of this end-time event is crystal clear in the Bible. “*Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn*.'" (Matt 13:30). “*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life*” (Gal 6:7-8).

The fullness of the Kingdom will come when the harvest comes. When all things will be subjected to Christ the King, when God will be ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28). When we pray “Thy Kingdom Come” we are asking God to: Rule us by His Word and Spirit, to strengthen and continue to gather His church, to destroy the devil’s work and to *“do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect that in it you are all in all*”.

Brothers and sisters in Christ there is great comfort, assurance and peace in the parable of the growing seed. The seed has already been sown in the hearts of many of the citizens of God’s Kingdom. It is God Himself who germinates this seed of life. It is God Himself who causes the growth. It is God Himself who will bring His work to completion at the end of this age.

These words of the Apostle Paul express this wonderful reality for all citizens of the Kingdom of God: “*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*” (Phil 1:6). The Kingdom of God is being established by the powerful, sovereign work of God. The Kingdom of God will be completed when Christ returns! The Harvest will come! “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God*” (Rev 21:1-3).

Congregation, look, see the Kingdom is being established like a growing plant. The empires and kingdoms of this earth may yet rise and fall again. Do not be surprised or troubled by this because the harvest is coming. Christ is coming and then His Kingdom will be complete.

Let us Worship and give praise, honour and exalt the King! “*For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation*” (Daniel 4:34b).

AMEN.