

Title: "Thy Kingdom Come: Love!"

Text: Luke 1:26-38, **39-56**

Turn with me if you would to the Gospel of Luke again.

- Earlier in the service we read of the angel's annunciation to Mary,
  - inviting her to participate with God in giving birth to the Messiah.
- Now I'd like to read the second part of that same story, as Mary goes off to visit her cousin Elizabeth in Luke 1:39-56.

If you remember, the angel Gabriel had told Mary to go visit her cousin Elizabeth as confirmation that what he was telling her was true.

- For he told Mary that Elizabeth was also expecting a baby,
  - even though she had been barren all her life, and was now past child-bearing years.

The angel's point to Mary was, if even Elizabeth can be miraculously pregnant, then believe the good news that you can be, too:

"For nothing is impossible with God," the angel had said.

So hear again the familiar story of what happens next.

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As most of you know, throughout Advent we have been exploring together what Jesus meant when he taught his disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

And we have been using the four candles of the Advent wreath as a way of unpacking what we are praying for when we pray "Thy Kingdom come."

- So far we have seen that we are praying for the Hope of God's kingdom to come, and the peace of God's kingdom to come, and the joy of God's Kingdom to come.

Today, our focus is on praying for more and more of the Love of God's Kingdom to come.

- One of the most famous verses in the whole Bible is, of course, John 3:16.

“For God so LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.”

Well, that is essentially what Christmas is all about: God so loved the world that He sent us His Son.  
And the way God chose to do this, was by having him “conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.”

What I’d like us to notice today on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent,  
-is the song that Mary sings at Elizabeth’s house  
when she discovers that everything the Angel had told her was true.

It’s then that Mary gives voice to the thoughts and feelings she has kept bottled up inside,  
-and she sings an amazing song of praise.  
-You might call it the very first Christmas Carol ever sung,  
-except that Jesus, though conceived, hasn’t been born Yet!  
-So it is still more of an Advent Carol, because there are Still months of expectant waiting yet to come for Mary,  
-and for the world.

But it’s a remarkable song she sings, and it tells us a few very significant things that Mary has learned in her experience so far about the love of God:  
-that Love of God, that caused Him to send His Son to this world.  
-that Love of God we are praying for more and more of when we pray, “Thy Kingdom come.”

Mary sings, “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!  
-That is Mary obviously singing forth her praise...but why?  
-What is she so excited about...having a baby out of wedlock?  
-No. That’s going to actually cause her a whole lot of heartache.

What she is stunned and amazed at, and full of praise for is:

“...for God has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.”

In other words, “God has been mindful of me!”

That’s what stuns and amazes Mary: that God actually knows her....that God actually chose her.

- That when choosing to love this world by sending His only begotten Son,
- he would be mindful of her and ask her to join Him.

You see, Mary feels loved by God herself in this!

- She senses that God doesn’t just “love the world” but He loves me!
- He actually knows MY name. He has had me in his mind.

And that is mind-boggling to Mary.

- She is stunned that of all the generations of women past, present, and future,
- she will be called “blessed” because God called her for this purpose of bearing His only begotten Son.

“The Mighty One has done great things for me,” she sings.

But then Mary doesn’t stay there dwelling only on how much she is personally loved by God.

She immediately broadens the scope of God’s love in her song,

- because she knows that this child to be born in her is to be the Savior of His people, and of the world.

She sings that God is sending His Son because He is also “remembering to be merciful to Abraham and His descendants forever.”

You see, Mary is proclaiming that God has not only been mindful of her, but is being mindful of His people Israel.

- He is “remembering” His covenant to them.
- He is getting ready to act on their behalf.

This is the first thing I want us to make note of today:

-When we are praying "Thy Kingdom come," we are praying for God to show forth His love,  
-by being mindful of us and by acting on our behalf.

This is what Mary saw God doing for her personally and for her people corporately in her day,  
-and when we pray "Thy Kingdom come," this is what we are praying for us to see more and more in our day.

"Lord, be mindful us and show us your great love by acting on our behalf."

All through the Bible when it says, "God remembered his people," or "God remembered David,"  
-it means God was ready to act.  
-It doesn't mean that God had forgotten them, and suddenly remembered who they were.  
-No, it means God saw the situation they were in and acted on his love for them by taking action on their behalf.

This is what Mary is praising God for in this song.  
-And then all through the heart of the song, Mary is actually singing of the way she knows God acts when he does take action on behalf of his people.

And you know what she sings? That when God acts He comes and "sets the world right."  
-He comes and turns the tables.

With His mighty arm, God comes and scatters those who are proud, but lifts up the humble.  
-He brings down rulers from their thrones, but raises up the lowly.  
-He sends the rich away empty, but fills the hungry with good things.  
-He helps his servant Israel, and even lowly maidens like Mary,  
-while the mighty nations and the queens of this world languish.

Mary sings of God's power to set the world right.

And this is the second thing I'd like you to note today:

-When we are praying "Thy Kingdom come," we are praying for God to show forth His power by setting the world right.

This, too, is a display of the Love of God.

-At first glance, you might think that turning the world upside down,  
-and sending the rich away empty,  
-and bringing rulers down from their thrones,  
-and scattering the proud,  
-seems at odds with the idea of a mindful God who cares about people.

It sounds like judgment, and like God is not being very nice.

-But God's judgment is not about being mean and vindictive.  
-It is about setting the world right.  
-It is about the righting of injustices,  
-and that is a loving thing to do.  
-It is about the raising up of those who have been downtrodden,  
-and calling to account the ones who have trodden them down.

And with God there is always an invitation to the proud to repent and humble themselves,  
-so that He, the LORD of lords, might raise them up.

There is always an invitation to the high and mighty rulers to repent and make themselves lowly,  
-so that He, the King of kings, might raise them up.

There is always an invitation to those who are full, to repent and make themselves empty,  
-because He, the great Provider, delights to "fill the hungry with good things."

These are the ways of God that Mary knows deep down,  
-and is experiencing in her own life, and is proclaiming back to God in praise,  
-and proclaiming to all the rest of us as a testimony.

She is giving witness that God in His great love, is mindful of us, and that He is mighty to act on our behalf, -and to set the world right.

It's the great truths of the Bible, that God is "all-caring," and "all-powerful."

When we pray, "Thy Kingdom come," we are inviting God to show forth His love by displaying those two attributes more and more and more so that His will is done on earth as in heaven.

Have you experienced these attributes of God in your life recently?

Has God shown up in some way causing you to think, "Oh my gosh, He is mindful of me!"?

Has God acted on your behalf recently such that you thought, "Wow, I thought that situation looked impossible, but I prayed and God did an amazing thing in working it out."

What has God done for you recently that caused you to sing, "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, because He has been mindful of me, and has come to act on my behalf."

Barbara Coyman had a million of these stories.

-She had a new one every week.

-And she would tell anyone and everyone the little stories of how she knew God loved her, because He was constantly showing her He "knew her" better than she knew herself, and would act on her behalf.

"Oh, my God, Paul," she would say, "Let me tell you what God did for me the other day."

"I was on my way to the gym and was parked at this red light..."

-and off she'd go with some amazing story about the guy who pulled up next to her at the stop light, and wanted to sell her some "hot goods" he had in his trunk.

-And somehow Barbara would end up talking to the guy about her boyfriend Jesus.

But you see, she was always looking for God to show up in her life.

-And He did: sometimes to convict her of being too “high and mighty and proud,” and invite her to repent.

-She would openly tell you about those moments, too.

-Things God asked her to repent of.

-But just as likely, God would show up to bless her in some way, and show her he was all-caring, and all-powerful.

And she would give him praise: her soul would glorify the Lord, because she knew He had been mindful of her, his humble servant.

I want more and more of those experiences in my life, and in the life of this church, and in the life of God’s people everywhere.

And so I keep on praying, “Thy Kingdom come, Lord, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Let’s pray.