

Week 50 Daily Devotional

I. Prayer to enter the Lord's presence:

Be still for a moment. "Lord, I give the day that is now past to you. It is yours. I give the day that is to come to you; help me to see where you are working and to join you there. Speak to me during these moments. I commit them and myself to you."

II. Prayer of Confession:

"Lord, you are faithful to forgive me and cleanse me of my sin when I confess it to you. I confess my sin(s) of _____. Thank you for forgiveness." (1 John 1:9)

III. Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Choose to be thankful, speak out loud of what God has done.

"Thank you, Father, for _____. Fill my heart and my mouth with gratitude throughout this day."

IV. Scripture Reflection

Day 1

Read:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

Reflect:

At the core of Christmas is the reality that, in Christ, God’s rule and reign have come to earth; His Kingdom *has been* established. His Kingdom *can be* experienced. His will and His rule *can be* honored. But the mystery of the Kingdom is that God’s power is present here among us *in fullness, but not in completeness*. The Kingdom of God grows up in the midst of the present, evil age, which is under the rule of Satan.

Scholar G.E. Ladd describes it this way, “[Jesus’] mission, as well as His Messiahship, was a ‘mystery’; it was not to bring the evil Age to its end and inaugurate The Age to Come. It was rather to bring the powers of the future Age to men in the midst of the present evil Age; and this mission involved His death...Although the old Age goes on, the Kingdom of God has invaded the realm of Satan to deliver men from his rule. This was the mystery, the new disclosure of the divine purpose in the mission of our Lord.”¹

Living in the “already, not yet” Kingdom of God is a paradox. This morning, contemplate that the Kingdom of God has *already* come in Christ. The Kingdom of God has “invaded the realm of Satan to deliver men from his rule.” As one who enters the Kingdom through the blood of Christ, you *can* experience God’s rule and reign in every sphere of your life today. You *can* experience grace, power, redemption, healing and victory over Satan, your flesh, and the world. The arm of God is not too short.

Respond:

Thank the Father for His sovereign plan to bring His rule and His reign to earth in Christ. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice to establish the Kingdom. Thank the Holy Spirit for making the Kingdom come to life in us. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the humility to bow before the King in service today. And then ask the King to make His power and goodness known to you and through you today.

¹Ladd, G. E. (1959). [*The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*](#) (p. 110-111). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Day 2

Read:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

Reflect:

At the core of Christmas is the reality that, in Christ, God’s rule and reign have come to earth; His Kingdom *has been* established. His Kingdom *can be* experienced. His will and His rule *can be* honored. But the mystery of the Kingdom is that God’s power is present here among us *in fullness, but not in completeness*. The Kingdom of God grows up in the midst of the present, evil age, which is under the rule of Satan.

Living in the “already, not yet” Kingdom of God is a paradox. Yesterday, we focused on the reality that the Kingdom of God has *already* come in Christ. This morning, focus on the reality that the Kingdom of God has *not yet* been established in completeness. Remember that, you can “already” experience the Kingdom of God, but you will “not yet” experience it in completeness. The present, evil age has not yet come to an end. We still live in an age that is marred by sin and death.

Today, you may find yourself caught up between these two realities: “already, but not yet.” To live between the two Advents is to struggle. You may find yourself struggling with sin, sickness, disease, relational brokenness, loss, and dismay at the suffocating headlines announcing worldwide disorder. If you are struggling, know that God sees you. He hears your cry. He is still good. He is still powerful. He is still on the throne. And it’s okay to struggle. But as you struggle, ask yourself this: “What am I going to put in the gap?” There is a gap between my expectations for life and reality. What am I going to choose to put in the gap? Anger? Frustration? Doubt? Despair? Or hope?

Respond:

What unmet expectations do you have for you life? What have you been putting in the gap between your unmet expectations and reality? How has it affected you?

Now, ask God to help you replace any unhealthy things you’ve put in the gap with hope: a settled expectation that God will come through on His promises in His way and in His timing.

Day 3

Read:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Reflect:

Jesus came to announce the Kingdom of God on earth. He was, in fact, a King. But He was not the King many of the Jews were expecting. In fact, they were so confused and offended by Jesus' claims that they sought to humiliate him and even kill him. What they didn't know was that, though they purposed to humiliate him, they actually enthroned Him. They adorned His head with a twisted crown of thorns. They placed a majestic, purple robe across His blood-smeared shoulders. They lifted Him up for all to see on a cross. They announced His reign with a rugged sign that they fixed above His head: “King of the Jews”. Jesus was a King, but He was not the King many were expecting.

What a grim and horrific end Jesus faced. And, yet, the author of Hebrews writes with divine authority: “*For the joy set before him he endured the cross...*” *For the joy? Yes, for the joy.* Jesus saw the cross not simply as an obstacle, but as an opportunity - an opportunity to be obedient to the Father and to walk in the middle of His will. Jesus' dying would bring life to the world, once again. What a joy.

Every Kingdom has an ethic. And at the core of the ethic of the Kingdom of God is a cross. It is not an easy cross to bear, but it is far more than an obstacle. On the other side of the obstacle, and maybe even within the obstacle, itself, lies an opportunity - an opportunity to be obedient to the Father and to walk in the middle of His will for your life. *What a joy.*

Respond:

What obstacle are you facing in life today? Jesus knows what you are up against. He's been there Himself. How can looking to Jesus' life and example help you to “not grow weary and lose heart”?

Ask Jesus to help you see the opportunity within the obstacle. Ask the Holy Spirit for courage to walk in the middle of the Father's will and to find joy in the process.

Day 4

Read:

“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (Luke 9:23-24)

Reflect:

The paradox of the “already, not yet” Kingdom of God confronts us. The Kingdom of God has come in Christ, but it grows up in the midst of the present, evil age, which is under rule of Satan. We find ourselves caught between these two present realities, constantly faced with the decision of whether we will submit to the reign of Christ the King or to the reign of our world, our flesh, and, ultimately, the reign of Satan.

As we face this confrontation, Jesus says we have two options: to try to “save” our lives and, as a result, lose them. Or to willingly “lose” our lives for Christ’s sake and, as a result, save them.

Jesus’ call to self-sacrifice is counter-cultural. The prevailing desire of our culture today is to “save” our lives. If you were to poll a representative segment of Americans as to their goals and values in life, we’d probably end up with a list like this: comfort, freedom, prosperity, success, advancement, authority, individualism, autonomy. Self-sacrifice? No, it probably wouldn’t make the list.

And yet Jesus says that *true life cannot be found unless we die* to the present age, to self-rule, and to the desires of the flesh. He promises that, *in this dying, we will find life*. That is the paradox of the “already, not yet” Kingdom of God.

Respond:

Ask God to show you any ways you might be trying to resist His counsel and direction in order to “save” your life. If the Spirit brings something to mind, surrender it to Him and move forward with faith and obedience. If nothing comes to mind, commit to Jesus that you will live to “lose” your life this day, for His sake.

Day 5

Read:

“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.” (Daniel 2:44-45)

Reflect:

In order that Daniel might interpret King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, God gave Daniel the ability to see what was coming in the future. What Daniel saw was a Kingdom set up by God: a Kingdom that would never be destroyed; a Kingdom that would never be given over to another people; a Kingdom that would break in pieces all worldly kingdoms and bring them to an end; a Kingdom that would stand forever.

Jesus came as the King of that Kingdom. But, wait, He didn’t bring all the worldly kingdoms to an end. We still tarry here on earth. Was Daniel wrong? No. One day, Jesus will return again and the vision of Daniel will become our final reality.

Jesus, in His first Advent, came as a Suffering Servant to inaugurate the Kingdom. But Jesus, in His second Advent, will come as a Warrior-King to consummate it. And, at that time, He will execute *complete* righteousness and justice. He will establish *complete* healing and redemption and restoration. The broken present age will dissolve like chaff and be blown away. We will live forever in the presence of God. And He will wipe away every tear. (Revelation 21:1-8)

For the believer in Christ, this is a promised future reality. The work has been finished by Christ on the cross. The deposit has been made in the Holy Spirit. Rest assured, one day your “not yet” will become your “already”. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.

Respond:

Thank God for the future He has made for you. Ask Him to help you live, today, with the end in mind.

V. Prayer for others:

Pray specifically for the concerns of your life and the lives of others.

VI. Prayer of commitment:

“Lord God, I commit to love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind and to love my neighbor as myself. Empower me today to love you and others with everything that I am.” (Luke 10:27)

This Month's Scripture Memory:

Isaiah 53:4-6

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid him the iniquity of us all.