

## ARBC VISION 2023 – 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

Dear Ashley River Family,

Welcome to Week 2 of our 40 Days of Prayer! Please commit to this important discipline as we seek God's direction and guidance for ARBC this year and next!

This week's portion of the Lord's Prayer focuses on His Kingdom: *Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* Notice that our prayer is to bring heaven to earth!

### **Day 8 – May 3 – THE KINGDOM OF GOD (LUKE 17:20-21)**

The Kingdom is where the King rules. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Therefore, the kingdom of God is actually King Jesus' rule and reign in the hearts of His people. With that in mind, it makes sense why a large portion of Jesus' teaching was about His Kingdom – defining it, describing it, telling parables that illustrate it. The people of God's Kingdom can participate with Him where we live, work, play, and worship. May Ashley River Baptist Church and ALL of our members partner with King Jesus so that His "will is done on earth as it is in heaven." May the focus of our prayers release God's Kingdom and reveal it to our world!

*Spend time with God in prayer and ask Him to give you ways to reveal His Kingdom to your world.*

### **Day 9 – May 4 - KINGDOM-MINDED (MATTHEW 13)**

In the four Gospels, the word "kingdom" occurs 121 times! By contrast, the word "church" occurs twice. Being kingdom-minded is paramount and priority. For Jesus, the Kingdom was the priority. The Kingdom was part of His first sermon (Mark 1:14-15), what He preached regularly (Luke 8:1), what He talked about for the last 40 days He walked this earth (Acts 1:3), and what He taught His disciples to pray (Matt. 6:9-10), proclaim (Matt.10:7) and pursue (Matt. 6:33).

Maybe we have lost the priority of the Kingdom somewhere in the midst of our Western ideas of a kingdom, our democratic perspective on governance, our misunderstanding of the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom, or our theological constructs. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells seven parables all related to the Kingdom. In the midst of those parables, Jesus says that the "secrets" of the Kingdom have been given to those who belong to the Kingdom. Being Kingdom-minded means we are aware of the secrets and pursue a deeper understanding of those secrets and how to live them out as Kingdom people.

Are we Kingdom-minded? Characteristics of a Kingdom lifestyle are discovered throughout the "secrets" of Matthew 13. Kingdom-minded people bear fruit, live distinctively, live incarnationally, see transformation regularly, act counter-culturally, pursue continually, and live sacrificially.

*Spend time with God in prayer and ask Him to reveal to you the secrets of His Kingdom.*

**Day 10 – May 5 – KINGDOM WORK (LUKE 10:17-21)**

As I read Luke and Acts, tracing their major themes, one of the threads that caught my attention was the thread of joy. One of our worship objectives at Ashley River is a Spirit-filled and joy-filled experience. The church gathered on Sundays is like a family reunion, where we reconnect with our loved ones and share what God is doing in our lives, which invokes us to worship Him in Spirit and Truth!

In the passage for today, Luke 10:17-21, Jesus sent out the disciples for ministry, and they came back rejoicing about what happened as they ministered in His name. There is a lot we could parse out here, but what captured my attention was Jesus' response in Luke 10:21 – “Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit.”

As I read this passage, I felt Jesus' joy in partnering with His people, in empowering His people to do the work He created them to do. Revealing the things of the Kingdom to "little children" is thrilling to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus was filled with joy to see the Kingdom lived out in front of His eyes through His friends. It brings Jesus great joy to partner with you and I can see Jesus smiling.

*Spend time with God in prayer and ask Him to kindle the joy of your salvation and partnership with Jesus in the Kingdom's work.*

**Day 11 – May 6 – KINGDOM LIVING (MATTHEW 5:13-16)**

God's Kingdom is being built upon the Living Cornerstone, Jesus (1 Pet. 2:4), and on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets (Eph. 2:20). God is using the believers, the living stones to build His Kingdom from the past, to the present, and into eternity (1 Pet. 2:5), and this living Kingdom is ever-growing and expanding (Acts 13:49).

The Kingdom is dependent on the new hearts, natures, and spiritual value system that God gives (John 1:12). Our identity has become His (Gal. 4:19). The Kingdom is being built by God Himself, using His holy living materials to build it, which are His chosen living stones. The distinctive lifestyle of the lives of Christians comes from a transformational disposition of the heart by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 5:3-10). This is a transformation as the result of the living presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in us (Gal. 2:20).

In Matthew 5:13-16 we are "salt" and "light" of this world! How could it be? Without the life and influence of Jesus Christ in us, our lives would bear no result nor influence! God is establishing His Kingdom from eternal past, to present, into eternity; and He is doing it with the Body of Christ where Christ is the head of this Body (Eph. 5:23). Jesus is the Head of Ashley River!

*Spend time with God in prayer and commit to Him to be His salt and light in our world.*

**Day 12 – May 7 – THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM (MATTHEW 24:14)**

Are we living in the end times? The disciples came to Jesus privately and asked, “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Remarkably, this question received Jesus’ longest and most detailed response than any other question posed to Him. We can surmise that this was a very important teaching for Jesus and therefore for us.

Over and over again, Jesus told His disciples to “watch” and “stand firm.” In our verse for today, He said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Through our cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention and the International Mission Board, and with our partnership with the Gideons International, we aim to get the Gospel to the world. That is part of our global mission.

Here in Charleston, we have work to do. God has brought the mission field to us, with all of the influx of people coming from every part of our nation. Our mission is the Great Commission – to make disciples by sharing the Good News! Notice that it is a co-mission, meaning that we are partnership with God in seeing lives transformed by the Holy Spirit!

*Spend time with God in prayer and commit to Him to give you opportunities and boldness in sharing your faith with others – those you know and those you see.*

**Day 13 – May 8 – KINGDOM DIVERSITY (JOHN 13:31-38; REVELATION 7:9-10)**

In the beginning of what is known as the “Upper Room Discourse” (which spans John 13-17), Jesus washed His disciples' feet then predicted His betrayal by Judas. Jesus then tells of His leaving for the cross and predicts the denial of Peter. In the middle of this conversation, Jesus gives them a new command: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” And then He expressed the powerful influence of such love: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Jesus knew that His disciples would need each other when He tucked in between loving one another is “as I have loved you.” This isn't just Jesus' example of sacrificial love for the world; we also need to receive His love and be filled with His love. Only then can we love one another and our neighbors.

The purpose is so that the world will know that we are followers of Jesus. Even though he denied Jesus, Peter himself would learn the global reach of Christ’s Kingdom when he encountered Cornelius in Acts 10. And one day, when we are assembled with the saints in heaven, we will see the diversity of His Kingdom – “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language.” May we keep this in mind as we engage our community with the Gospel of the Kingdom!

*Spend time with God in prayer and ask Him to give you eyes to see and hearts to love our community.*

**Day 14 – May 9 – KINGDOM STEWARDSHIP (ROMANS 8:19-23)**

In the garden of Eden, God gave Adam the responsibility to “work it and take care of it.” (Gen. 2:15). Let us remember that God was the first “conservationist”! But with the fall of mankind in Genesis 3, all of creation too has suffered the effects of sin. This is what I think of when I read Romans 8:19-23. Anticipation and longing form a palpable tension between what is and what we hope will come to be: the coming of God's Kingdom.

Strikingly, Paul intertwines creation's anticipation with the fate of humanity. Creation awaits liberation "from its bondage to decay" while humanity awaits adoption and redemption. In fact, creation's liberation is dependent on humanity's redemption; it waits in expectation "for the children of God to be revealed" in order that it might be “brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." Kingdom living brings life to the whole world.

In our redemption, we become what we were created to be: participants in the Kingdom of God who rule over and take care of creation. Let us embrace our role as stewards of God's creation and let us bring heaven to earth.

*Spend time with God in prayer and ask Him to give you wisdom in how to demonstrate love for His Kingdom's creation – people, animals, and environment.*