

Awaiting the Kingdom**Session 3****Waiting Faithfully****Pray**

Father, as we contemplate further regarding your Kingdom and the challenges of the Empire-we pray that your truth would reign in our hearts and that our focus would always be on you, your glory and our engagement in the world for your sake. Amen

Introduction- We saw in session 1 that the Kingdom of God is a vast concept

In Session 2 we saw that there were forces working against the Kingdom of God. But that King Jesus was still on the throne.

Now in Session 3 we will look at 2 ways in which the empire tries to keep us from living faithfully as Kingdom citizens and then we will look at the Kingdom in its fullness-called the consummated kingdom.

It is difficult to wait

Michael Bird and NT Wright tell us...

“In a world of rising empires, endless calamities, pandemics, terrorism, democratic disarray and culture wars, what is a Christian to think of all this, or to do about it?”

“The Church’s answer to the global crises of our day is, in sum the Kingdom of God. The Church’s message and mission rest on the notion that God is King, God has appointed Jesus as the King of Kings and Lord of lords, and the Church’s vocation is to build the kingdom! Our working hypothesis is that the kingdom of God is not from this world, but it is emphatically for this world.” Bird, Wright

We wait, living out our faith with hope FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD

Jeremiah 29 where the prophet is giving the missionary context to the exiles from Jerusalem..

“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you too into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

Do we often think of kingdom work in these terms? We live as exiles and there is wisdom for us here also.

We need more than ever to recover our kingdom vocation.

Waiting Faithfully

- We are called to be peculiar people-those different from those who don't know God. As God's people who live as Kingdom Citizens in the shadow of the empire,
- How are we to live out the special calling God has for his people? By being the true humanity that Christ exemplified for us

I Peter 2:9, Romans 12:1-2 Speak to the over-arching categories

- Holy-set apart for his purposes
- Not conforming to the evil patterns of the world
- Aware of the empires influences in our lives-What are the siren calls of our day?
- What idolatries have stepped in and are barely recognizable to us, if at all-“How's the water boys?
- Elemental spiritual forces-basic assumptions we use in our thinking that come from the world.-they should be challenged
- These ungodly philosophies are tools of the enemy
- I've identified a few that seem to have a stronghold on even the church.
- If we had time it would serve us well to look at Individualism, pragmatism, humanism, technicism, and how the gospel has been truncated and our need to understand the story line of the Bible

Resist self-indulgence- Where earlier generations of Christians esteemed sacrifice and service to others as the highest king of virtue, we are more likely today to hear church leaders speak of the need to be “True to ourselves” in our culture, the hero is not the person who lays aside anything and everything for the sake of the world but rather is told to be true to self and follow their dreams. But what if Jesus' call on our lives is much better than dreams?

Over consumption- The Empires influence here is: Strong

“We are so comfortable in our consumer culture that our stuff pile is so high it blocks our view of the coming kingdom.

Leslie Newbigin- Between us and God is our pile of stuff”

Currently I’m failing as this more than I’m being faithful

- Strong pattern of the world- we are marketed to over 10,000 times a day
- Ubiquitous-we see it everywhere
- The West today resembles John’s portrayal of Babylon in Revelation (All cultures have idols)
- Some say this is the biggest threat to the church.
- Over desire for wealth , influence and possessions
- American dream is a lie-We’ve been sold a bill of goods, it’s inconsistent with the upside-down kingdom

- Our identify today in the West is more about what we have or consume than who we are and what we produce
- 1% of adults have over 40% of the global wealth
- 30% of the world’s population consumes 80% of its resources.-it’s highly questionable if this is sustainable, even in the near future.
- “Affluenza” Clive Hamilton
- Consumer debt is at an all-time high
- We have storage units for our over-flow
- Our consumption negatively affects God’s creation and hurts others
- More and more our lives are monetized and driven by the market.
“This latest drinking cup has to live up the hype” How often do we go a single day without spending money or planning on spending money?
- We have a consumption problem and it’s a spiritual problem
- Wealth is not sin- we are the wealthy Jesus warned .
- Wealth is a blessing-but we have to remind ourselves of Jesus’ words, “It’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the KINGDOM of heaven (Matt 19:24)
- Luke 12:15 “Then he said to them, watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. Life does not consist of an abundance of possessions.”
- Are we on our guard regarding our possessions and consumption patterns?
- Our wealth is a Kingdom issue

- We don't need to feel guilty being consumers-God made us to be consumers and you and I are not responsible for the systems that are in place-we are only responsible to live faithfully within it, as best we can.
- We should enjoy freely and joyfully the gifts God has given us (Eccles)
- The problem isn't our wealth but what we do with it-we have been blessed to be a blessing, not to consume as much as possible

- But when is enough, enough?
- What is the opportunity cost of this lifestyle?
 1. It insulates us from our need for God and blocks the kingdom
 2. It numbs pain we need to face with God-Shopping therapy
 3. It hurts others and God's creation
 4. It is hugely distraction-AMAZON
 5. We are being sold a bill of goods that's a lie. He who dies with the most toys doesn't win
 6. Rise in Psych disorders and alienation –things and experiences can't fix our souls.
 7. Because our consumption doesn't help our emptiness and anxiety but feeds them.
 8. "And if we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world." C.S. Lewis
 9. What we are seeking in over-consumption cannot be found in the patterns of the world

****Perhaps more insidious than greed and how our consumption hurts others and the environment is what it does to our souls.

Consumerism forms us to be a particular type of person and this affects our relationship with God and others- the liturgy of the market cannot form us into the true humanity Christ calls us to.

How we indulge our children is forming them into a certain type of person too. Our kids don't need more stuff. They need us and they need Christ.

- We are being formed by the market rather than God's word and spirit.
- The market does not decide the value of a human being
- The enemy is using our consumer market to neutralize Christians in regards to the kingdom
- We often are more concerned with flooring choices than God's kingdom and those who need the saving Grace of Christ
- Almost every part of our lives have been monetized
- Even our very personage has been turned into a commodity
- Take the example of "Branding"
- Branding marks people with a certain identity
- Christians are to be marked by their baptisms and holy living
- We become products to be sold and exploited in social media for consumption rather than people created in God's image
- People are seen as commodities-and discarded once they are no longer useful
- Relationships become revolving doors-marriage and friendships are discarded once they don't meet our needs. Then we are on to the next ones
- Our identities are in what we consume and how many likes we get, not in who we are, image bearers who have been bought with a price.
- 18-30 year olds want to be influencers
- If we see our vocation as primarily making more money-we view our God-given gifts in a monetized way
- What about church? We need to think long and hard at what our consumerism has done to our relationship to the church
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- The opportunity cost is high here.
- Deconstruction faith- "it doesn't work for me" "The church disappointed me" I didn't get everything I thought I deserved from God and his people so I will just move on and find another worldview where I can enter a trash God's bride
- While the minimalists movement has many problems if its seen as a mandate for godliness there is something very attractive about resisting consumption and consumerism If we understand how they are forming us to be a certain kind of person

Our faithfulness to help the less fortunate, our acts of obedience here is a witness.

Early church Witness (A contrast to our current situation)

Helping the poor is in the Bible over 2000 times-The poor and marginal were on Jesus' heart.

The early church (1-3 C) understood this.

“Nothing has contributed to the progress of the superstition of these Christians as their charity to strangers, the impious Galileans provide not only for their own poor but for ours as well. “ **Julian, Last Roman emperor**

Also:

Adoption/exposure of infants- Iceland example

Loving Enemies

Living Holy lives

Forgiveness

Justice

Burying poor

Caring for widows

What outsiders saw was not only their worship, it was also their habitus
Listen to quotations from those who observed them

According to **Tertullian**,

“The outsider looked at the Christians and saw they were energetically feeding poor people and burying them, caring for boys and girls who lacked property and parents. They interpreted these actions as works of love and said ‘Look how they love one another!’” Alan Krieder

Cyprian 256

“Beloved, we are philosophers not in words but in deeds, we exhibit our wisdom not by our dress, but by truth; we know virtues by their practice, rather than boasting of them. We do not speak of great things, we live them”

Diogenes (2 or 3 century)

“For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by country, language or custom. For nowhere do they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do

they practice an eccentric way of life. . . But while they live in both Greek and barbarian cities as each one's lot was cast, they follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, at the same time they demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their citizenship. They live in their own countries, but only as non-residents; they participate in everything as citizens and ensure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their Fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like everyone else and have children but they do not expose their offspring. They share their food but not their wives. They are in the flesh but they do not live according to the flesh. They live on the earth but their citizenship is in heaven."

We are to examine our own consumption not others

- We cannot fix this: What you want to do for everyone, do for one
The poor in your own church/neighborhood

Remember Jeremiah 29- to seek and pray for the welfare of your city

When we share what we've been blessed with we manifest the kingdom to a broken World.

Faithful response

1. Requires wisdom-pray for God to reveal if this is a problem in your heart: are you overconsuming to meet a need that only Christ can meet?
2. Dependent on your resources (time included) we are to bless others. We've been blessed to be a blessing
3. Care is needed-We neither created the economic system we live in, and we can't fully retreat from it.
4. To be faithful with our wealth-We need to see it as a way to bless others
5. Early church grew exponentially-they were known (among other things) for taking care of not only their own poor but also for the poor outside the church-early church was predominately poor people. Would we like that today?

Emotions

We are constantly told to follow our heart and indulge our emotions. (What we feel-emotions)

We should not indulge our emotions

We shouldn't stuff them either-they are strong teachers but terrible leaders

Emotions can lie to us

Truth should trump our emotions

So we should be careful of their influence in decision making.

Because we feel something doesn't mean it's correct

Emotions were affected by the fall

We might feel like we are in the wrong body but that's not true.

The Transgender fiasco we now face is an indulgence of emotions that is off the rails.

We need to see this movement for what it is-a satanic ploy to confuse and blind people to the truth.

We should exercise deep compassion for those following this path: what level of deception is taking place when people created in the image of God, Male and Female, are led to mutilate their bodies or their children's bodies?

Be in Elinor in a Maryanne world (Characters in Sense and Sensibility)

Unity

Current situation

Christians online sound more like late night pundits when speaking of those they disagree with.

John 17:22-23

"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me- so that the world might believe that you have sent me."

Remember-Whoever is not against us for us. Mark 9:38-41

Chinese church leader

“In a world of dissension, the unity of the church is a witness, testifying to the fathers loving action in sending his son to the world-The body of Christ should mirror the Son’s unity with the father. In a broken world the Holy church is a witness that shows the world the alternative to division and brokenness.” ~ Soong-Chan Rah

We need to approach Unity from a missional vantage point

- Our unity speaks to a watching world
- We WILL disagree
- It’s important to stand for truth
- We shouldn’t compromise
- But we need to distinguish between essential and non-essential issues
- We are wrong on somethings
- Can we love unity, for the sake of the world, more that our tertiary, denominational distinctive?

- “In essentials-Unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity”
Rypertus Meldenius

Posture: R.C. Sproul story about Billy Graham

Men who had significant doctrinal differences

Dr. Sproul, will you see Billy Graham in heaven?

We need to be careful of how we speak of other Christians-even when they are wrong

- Christians and their practices look different at different times and in different places
 - Different denominations does not preclude unity
 - To illustrate- Cosmic Space man
- A. Original Jerusalem church 37 AD
- Meet in temple

- Animal sacrifices
- Strict 7th day Sabbath keepers
- Large families
- Call Jesus messiah
- Circumcise males
- Share many meals together
- Meet in each other's homes
- Love God's law and festivals
- Almost all Jews
- Follow inspired writings called the O.T.
- Concerned with following Jesus' teachings

B. Council of Nicaea 325 AD

- People from all over the world
- Few Jews
- Appear hostile to Jews
- No animal sacrifices
- None married
- None had children
- Not proponents of circumcision
- Not 7th day Sabbath
- Call Jesus LORD
- Inspired writing included both OT and NT
- Concerned with Theology & Metaphysics

C. Ireland 600's

- Monks are gathered on a rocky coastline
- They enter the ice-cold water up to their necks
- They recite Psalms together
- Standing in cruciform
- Some lived in caves
- Not very interested in theology
- Very concerned with the dating of Easter
- Strong desire for holiness
- None are married

D. London Missionary Conference 1840

- LARGE assembly
- Promoting Christian Commerce in Africa
- Plan to distribute Bibles 4,000 miles away
- Organize to end slave trade/slavery

- Writing pamphlets to promote Black literacy
- Read from their Book
- Recite the Nicene Creed
- Marked by social action

E. Lagos Nigeria 1980

- All wearing white robes
- Dancing in worship
- Chanting
- Expressing God's power
- Giving individual messages from God to each other
- Acknowledge Nicene Creed but have little instruction on it.

Space man is confused- What do Christians believe?

F. He observed what they had in common

- All claim to be Christians but concerned with different things
- History connected each one to the message passed down from different cultures
- All held the person of Christ as ultimate significance
- Used sacred writings
- Used Bread, wine, water in special ways
- Each group thinks of itself as having some connection with the other
- More remarkable- each thought of itself in some ways as continuous with ancient Israel

Conclusions from spaceman

- Christians look, act different across time, place and denominational lines
- Our pugilistic behavior and words towards each other undercut unity
- How can the world believe that God sent Jesus when we are ripping each other's heads off?

Ephesians 4:1 Listen to the words of Paul

“As a prisoner for the LORD, I then urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit and thus the bonds of peace

There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”

- Stand firm on essentials (Creeds as parameters)
 - Unity does not mean conformity
 - We don't deny differences
 - Live in harmony, strive for peace, watch how we speak of other Christians
 - Our unity impacts how the world views Jesus
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- Our unity is missional-That the world might know
 - Our unity reflects the nature of God's kingdom

We've examined self-indulgence and unity-as stated earlier-there are many more things that we could examine.

These things can be discouraging but we have every reason to hope.

Wait Hopefully and Actively Engaged

It is good to be reminded here-God uses kingdom acts to advance his kingdom BUT this advancement comes in mostly

God builds the kingdom- It is not constructed by human hands

We build FOR the kingdom

- God has ordered his world in such a way that he uses us, his image bearers

- Psalm 8:6- psalmist tells us that God has given us dominion over the work of his hands

We will hear glorious things about God's kingdom today. And we will go home and

- Our kids will be fighting
- Our husband will be annoying
- The toilet will be running
- The house will be a mess
- Your employer will still be a jerk
- And you will still have an unfair teacher

Rather than give into discouragement, this is a time to smile to ourselves and remind ourselves that the kingdom is not fully here yet. And we pray and roll up our sleeves and do the kingdom work of serving forgiving and choosing a godly response, knowing a day will come when these things will not be so.

Living in already, hoping for the not yet

A sobering point The consummated kingdom, when the kingdom comes into its fullness when Christ returns, will be for those that love him.-it will mean judgment for those who reject him.

“The New Testament is quite clear that the human enemy, whom we must love, will also come under judgment on the great and terrible day of the Lord. To pray ‘Thy Kingdom come’, is a solemn thing indeed”. Graeme Goldsworthy

Isaiah 2:12

The Lord almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty.

If you are here today, and have not trusted Christ-Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand.

For those who are God's children-What will the new creation be like?

New heavens/Earth/New Jerusalem

- The curse will be reversed , the reality of the fulfilled kingdom will come when Jesus returns

T. Desmond Alexander states:

“One day this present age will give way to another, when the Earth will be rejuvenated and the sovereignty of God will finally become an undisputed reality in the New Jerusalem. Until then we are taught to pray”

“Thy Kingdom come thy will be done.”

Some day we won't need to pray this

- Christ's kingship will be over everything. Zechariah 14:9
- Daniel 2:44-45 Wicked Kings of the earth will be destroyed
- Satan will be totally and forever defeated
- Sin will be no more
- Every last vestige of Satan's influence will be destroyed Rev 21:8
- Abundance, fullness, shalom reign
- Our final resting place is not heaven-but the New Jerusalem; the New Heavens and the New Earth

Emil Brunner writes:

“The world into which we shall enter in the Parousia of Jesus Christ is therefore not another world; it is this world, this heaven, this earth; both however, will have passed away and renewed. It is these forests, these trees, these cities, these streets, these people that will be the scene of redemption. At present they are battlefields the full of strife and sorrow of the not yet accomplished consummation; then they will be fields of victory, fields of harvest, where out of seed that was sown with tears, the everlasting sheaves will be reaped and brought home.”

The Entire Cosmos will be delivered from the Curse

Romans 8:19-23

That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought in to the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Animals will no longer be predators

Isaiah 11:6-9

The wolf (Josh Harp) will lie down with the lamb, leopard will lie down with the goat. The calf and the lion and the yearling will lie together. The lion will eat straw like the Ox.

Isaiah 11:8

The nursing child will play by the hole of a cobra and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.

- Bats
- Roaches
- Termites

All Pain & Sadness abolished

Revelation 21:4

“And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying or pain; the first things have passed.”

- Severed relationships
- Your abortion
- Addiction
- Loss of a loved one
- Infertility
- Learning disability that makes life seem unbearable
- Loneliness
- Abuse suffered
- Financial burdens

Isaiah 65:20

Never again will there be in infant who lives but a few days or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child

God's righteousness will reign- the justice we so long for will be realized

- He will separate the sheep/goats, wheat /tares

- Oppression, racism will never see the light of day again
- Injustices will be removed

Isaiah 9:6

“ Of the greatness of his government and peace there is no end He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding justice and righteousness.”

Social transformation

- No war- Isaiah2:4 “They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning knives. Nation will not lift up a sword against nation and never again will they learn war. “Reverses Joel 3:9-10
- Revelation 22:2-nations healed
- . God’s diverse people will dwell together peacefully

Revelation 7:9

“I looked and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation, all the tribes, people, and languages standing before the throne and before the lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb:

Imagine full inclusion of the nations-this is the eschatological fulfillment

Revelation 5:9

24 elders & living creatures saying to Jesus

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to break its seal, for you were slaughtered and you purchased people for God with your blood, from every tribe, language and people and nation. You have made them a kingdom of priests to our God and they will reign upon the earth.”

Isaiah 60

New Jerusalem

- Vision of a majestic city
- Not built by human hands
- Familiar objects will be different in some way
- All human achievement will become vessels for ministry

Technology

Art

Commerce

Architecture

Military

Economics

Isaiah60

The wealth of the nations will be brought into the new city

The wealth of the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come and you will drink the milk of nations:

The kings of the world will bring the wealth of their nations

- Camels from Midian
- Gold and Frankincense from Sheba
- Rams from Nebaioth
- Juniper, fir, cypress from Lebanon
- Silver and gold from Tarshish

The Creation mandate from Genesis 1-to fill the earth will be continued into eternity and the possibilities are infinite

The filling of the earth will be harnessed and remolded for the sake of God's glory.

Is your imagination swelling?

And what about your works and gifts? Somehow they will be part of the new creation. Do you see your work as kingdom work that will somehow be part of the Kingdom in its fullness?

What we do now is not worthless or in vain

What we do matters because it carries over into the final new creation!

If this is true:

- Every act of love and kindness
- All art and music inspired for the love of God
- Every minute teaching handicapped children
- Every act of care for a dying patient
- Every deed of comfort for another
- Every act that preserves beauty and truth
- Every deed that spreads the gospel
- Every deed that builds up the church
- Every deed that embraces holiness rather than corruption
- Every act that honors the name of Jesus

All of this will find its way through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation.

THIS means that what we do in Christ and by his spirit in the present is not wasted or discarded.

IN FACT-The work we do in the present to build for the kingdom will gain its full significance in the eventual consummation of the kingdom.

Is this how you view your daily routine?

The Best For last

God will dwell with his people again

The broken fellowship between people and God broken by the rebellion in Eden will be fully reversed-

- The shalom between God and man will surpass the garden (No temptation)
- We will see Jesus' face to face- "The Beatific vision"
- John leaning on Jesus in the upper room-John 13:23
- The longing we experience here, to be deeply knit in fellowship in the literal presence of God will be fulfilled

Revelation 22:4 They will see his face

“To see Jesus in glory will be the sight of God for which we have so long ached for.” David Martin

- The presence of Christ will replace all other light
- The center of the city will be the risen lamb- the one who lived and died for us.
- What was started in Jesus’ kingdom inauguration will come to a glorious completion.

Our hope- pictured in Revelation 5:1-6, 9

“A slain lamb! That is the victory which overcomes and puts the truth of the Kingdom of God within our midst.”

Graeme Goldworthy

Here John captures the fierce majesty and irresistible strength of Christ. Here he is represented as a warrior king, fresh from the battle with the blood of the foe upon his sword. The lion is able to open to all men the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but when John turns to see the lion he sees a lamb, standing as though it had been slain. “

“The Kingdom cannot be understood apart from the cross, not the cross without the kingdom.”
Herman Riderboss

A slain lamb! This is the victory that overcomes and puts the truth of the Kingdom of God within our reach.

In Revelation, John skillfully uses Jewish Apocalyptic images, brilliant colors. He uses vivid word pictures of the kingdom to illuminate this central paradox of the gospel

While we await the Kingdom’s full consummation-Where God will set the world right once and for all

- Make seeking God’s kingdom the top priority of your life
- Pour out your lives for the truth of the gospel
- Hold fast to Christ-keep your eyes on him
- Pour your life for the down-trodden and lost
- Enjoy the current gifts of the kingdom with gratitude and sharing with others

- Resist the Empires siren songs
- Live proleptically- with a hope that is so sure, we live as if it is already happened
- The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. There will be no more night-Revelation 22:5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and the consummated kingdom is when the kingdom comes into its fullness when Christ returns, will be for those that love him.-it will mean judgment for those who reject him.

"The New Testament is quite clear that the human enemy, whom we must love, will also come under judgment on the great and terrible day of the Lord. To pray 'Thy Kingdom come', is a solemn thing indeed". Graeme Goldsworthy

Isaiah 2:12

The Lord almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty.

WCF shorter catechism tells us that he will destroy all his and our enemies

- he will dwell with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away

He who was seated on the throne said "I am making all things new!

This is the gospel

This is the gospel that Jesus proclaimed-the gospel of the kingdom

From creation to new creation-the gospel of the Kingdom has a scope that is deep and it is wide.

It's cosmic and it's going to blow our minds

- Joy to the world, the Lord is come let Earth receive her king.

- Let every heart prepare him room
 - And heaven and nature sing.
 - He rules the world with truth and grace and
 - Makes the nations prove
 - The glories of his righteousness
 - And wonders of his love
-
- No more let sins and sorrows grow, or thorns infest the ground,
 - He comes to make His blessing flow Far as the curse is found

What is the scope of God's Kingdom? From ALL creation to new creation

Far as the Curse is found.

Let's stand and pray the Kingdom prayer Jesus taught us to pray

