

“The World’s Greatest Prayer—For Yours is the Kingdom, Power and Glory”

If you were to sit in a Christian worship service in any country of the world, spoken in any language it would be kind of hard. I’ve been to Christian worship services that were in Japanese, Russian, Spanish. I’ve been in services where several languages were used within that one service: Korean, Swahili, Latin, and even Texan. I didn’t understand a word of it. I didn’t know the music, or understand the readings, or the message, but when they got to the Lord’s Prayer, I could jump right in. I could join them in that prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer is the prayer that connects Christians around the world, it shapes belief and life. It’s a prayer that’s meant to be, not only spoken, but lived, put into action, applied to every part of our lives.

Today we’re wrapping up this series on the Lord’s Prayer. I’ve learned a lot in this series and I hope that you have too. And today we look at the very last phrase in this prayer that Jesus taught his followers to pray. **“For Yours is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever, Amen.”**

As we get started I want to point out that probably in most of your Bibles this phrase is not a part of the Lord’s Prayer in the gospel of Matthew or Luke. Instead it’s probably a footnote down at the bottom. One of my Bibles says this in the footnote: “Other ancient authorities add, in some form, ‘For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.’ Why is this part of the Lord’s Prayer a footnote?”

You see, the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament that we’ve discovered don’t have this last phrase. Most scholars agree that in Jesus’ time an ending like this, called a doxology, would have been a part of almost **every** prayer. It was implied. And over the centuries it has become a part of this prayer, or if you were raised Roman Catholic, a part of the liturgy of the mass.

It maybe just a footnote in many of our Bibles, but it packs a punch. It may not be in the oldest manuscripts, but it was almost certainly on the lips of Jesus and it has some serious power and insight in it. This last phrase offers an important affirmation when you come to the end of this prayer that Jesus taught his followers to pray.

Let’s start the with the three letter word, **“For.”** It’s easy to miss this little word, but don’t. It starts off this phrase and it means **“because.”** Here’s the idea: You can pray, “God, you are my father, your name is holy, your kingdom come, your will be done.” You can pray, “Lord, give us today that which we need to live.” You can pray, “Forgive us our sins, our debts.” You can pray, “Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from the Evil One.” You can pray all that **because**, the kingdom and the power and the glory belong to God!

Individually when we say “for” we’re saying, “Even though I am a sinner, even though I make mistakes and blow it, even though sometimes I don’t feel worthy to be called your son, your daughter, **because** of your kingship, your power, your glory I can pray this prayer.”

Let’s look at what we mean when we say the words Kingdom, Power, and Glory. A **kingdom** is a region that has a king who reigns over that area. The king has power and authority over the people and resources and the king is responsible for protecting the people in his realm.

So where is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is everywhere. God reigns over everything. God was before everything that is, and he will be here after everything that is. The far reaches of the universe, God reigns there.

God, the king, created human beings to be the recipients of his love, to return that love and do God’s work in the world. But God also gave us the freedom to reject his will. He gave us the ability to follow him as king or reject him as king. And from the beginning, the story of humanity is the story of God’s invitation, and humanity’s rejection of that invitation. And the Bible story is God’s attempt to draw people to himself. And the way he does that isn’t by sending a heavenly army to come and force people into submission. His plan, in Jesus, was to send the prince, his son, to walk this earth. Not to force people into submission and crush rebellion, but to win over the rebels with his love. That’s the story of Jesus.

Jesus went around and spent most of his time teaching about what God’s kingdom looks like. “This is the King, and this is his heart and his character and his desire.” Jesus loved to tell people that God’s kingdom is here, that it arrived in him, that it arrives in us when we choose to follow him.

Jesus said that in his kingdom, the first are last, and the last are first--the opposite of what the world says. He said that little children and the poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom. The meek, the poor, the outcasts, these people will inherit the kingdom. He talked about how the prostitutes and sinners who choose to follow Christ enter the kingdom before the religious people who are full of hypocrisy. He said the kingdom of God is like a party that everybody, everybody is invited to come to no matter where they are or what they've done.

Tony Campolo, the preacher, teacher, sociologist, tells about a time when he was in Honolulu at a conference. His first night there he couldn't go to sleep because of the jet lag so about 3:00 in the morning, after tossing and turning for hours, he got up and decided to find an all-night diner somewhere. He found one a few blocks away and as he sat there all by himself two prostitutes came in. It was obvious who they were and they were pretty vocal about it too. At one point Tony heard one of them say that the next day was her birthday. The other one said sarcastically, "So what do you want me to do, Agnes? Throw you a party?" And the first one said, "Hell no, why would you do that? I've never had birthday party in my whole life."

Later, as Tony left the diner, he asked the cashier if those two women were regulars. The guy, whose name was Harry, said, "Regulars! They are here every night at the same time." Tony said, "This might sound strange, but could I throw a little birthday party for Agnes right here tomorrow night?" Harry said he thought it would be a great idea. So Tony said, "Why don't you get the word out to some of the other regulars that we're going to have a surprise party for Agnes tomorrow morning at 3:30." The guy said he would.

About 2:30 the next morning Tony came in and started decorating the diner. It wasn't anything fancy, just some crepe paper and a few other little decorations. He also made a great big birthday card out of a piece of poster board. Harry baked and decorated a little cake. The place really looked festive. And when Agnes came in, everybody shouted, "Happy birthday, Agnes!" And her mouth fell open. She couldn't believe it.

When they brought in the cake she started crying. With tears streaming down her face she said, "I can't believe this. Nobody's ever done this for me. Ever! I've never had a birthday cake before. Why are you doing this?" And Tony said, "Because it's your birthday, Agnes, and you're a very special child of God!" Then Tony asked everybody there to hold hands together and he prayed a simple prayer for Agnes, thanking God for her life and asking God to bless her and help her to become the beautiful person he made her to be.

Later after everybody left, Tony and Harry were taking down the decorations and cleaning up and Harry said, "You're a pastor, aren't you?" "Yeah I am." Harry said, "What kind of church do you pastor?" Tony said, "I go to the kind of church that throws parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning."

Jesus said, "That's what the kingdom of God is like." He hung out with sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes.

Listen, over the last few years I've come to believe something right down to the core of my bones and it's this: That God, the king, is consumed with inviting people **into** his kingdom, not keeping them out. God, the king, will go to any length, so that people hear his invitation. The king sent the prince, prince Jesus, to tell the world, "Come, come follow me, come join the party, come find the life that really is life. Nobody, and I mean nobody has to miss out." That's the kingdom we're talking about when we say, "Yours is the kingdom..."

And God's is the **power**. God is the source of all power. At the beginning of the universe, whatever you believe, the moment of creation, the Big Bang, it doesn't matter, God was there, and God, with a word, spoke it all into existence. The unimaginable energy and power and matter of this universe is the result of one word from God.

When Moses asked God what his name was, God said, "I am." Meaning, "I am existence itself. All existence, all states of being, all life, comes from me." God is the power.

And to God belongs the glory. **Glory**. What is glory? Glory is fame, it means success, it means acclaim, it means to be praiseworthy. Glory also is a certain glow of energy, or magnificence, or light.

In the Old Testament, when people encountered God's glory, they fell facedown. They were awestruck and couldn't speak. When the angels appeared to the shepherds to tell them about Jesus' birth, they glory of the Lord shone all around them and they were terrified. They were struck with awe and wonder that was so amazing that it bordered on terror. That's what happens when people have a close encounter with God.

God is glorious, magnificent, majestic. And the glory of God was poured into Jesus Christ. The disciple John put it this way, **“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).**

The Bible talks about the glory of God being shown most clearly when Jesus was crucified. How is that God’s glory? Because in his death on the cross, Jesus shows the sacrificial love of God--the Prince going to the furthest extreme to make a way into God’s kingdom for anybody that would choose to follow him. That’s where glory is found. It’s found in losing your life, not in puffing yourself up.

Now I want us to back up just a little and look at the word that comes before kingdom, power and glory. It’s another little word that’s easy to ignore. It’s the word “yours.” Or the word **“thine.”** For yours, thine, is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.

In that word, “yours” or “thine” we’re saying, “Everything that is, everything I am, belongs to you, God. And power comes from you, and all the glory, the fame, the honor, belongs to you, not to me.”

But we struggle with saying to God, “All this is yours.” The tension comes from a little word we learn when we’re just starting to learn to talk. Maybe the third word we learn after Dada and Momma. It’s the word, “Mine.” We want what we want and we’re not afraid to take from our brothers or sisters or kids in the nursery.

Our girls have grown up here at Saint Paul’s and spent time in our nurseries as little ones. Our two year old has a tendency to take what she wants from other kids and a few times, if she can’t get what she wants, has bitten other children. When it’s the preacher’s kid biting in the nursery, it’s really a problem—‘cause I’ve been teaching her how to strike quick and not leave a mark, or sweep the knee and make it look like an accident.

That word, “mine” it just sticks with us the rest of our lives, doesn’t it. My house, my job, my family, my stuff, my retirement, my career...my, my, my, mine. And it’s awful hard to say, “Thine.” Sometimes we’re like the seagulls in the movie *Finding Nemo*

Don’t our lives look like that sometimes! To God...to each other. We’re constantly fighting over what’s mine. But God is saying, “You don’t understand, it’s really not yours. It’s on loan to you, but you can’t take it with you...you didn’t **bring** it with you.” Ultimately it’s God’s.

Something amazing happens to us when we finally figure that out in life and move from having a life that centered on what’s mine and realize that everything is thine. “I can’t take it with me. It’s all on loan to me. So God if there is anything you need, it’s yours. Yours is the power. I realize I’m powerless without you. I need your strength and power; I can’t do it myself. I need your help. And thine is the glory. Help me not to be so consumed with trying to impress other people and make them think well of me. Instead, help me to live my life in such a way that other people think well of you.” When we finally figure that out in our lives, it’s very liberating and freeing to say thine. For thine is the kingdom.

I realized not too long ago that control is an illusion. We try to control everything—the outcomes of our lives and destinies. But control is an illusion, because it doesn’t take much for our lives to come unglued, for us to lose our control. Most of us are just a fraction away from going insane. A lot of us are just 2 or 3 months away from economic disaster if something should happen to our incomes. There are folks who have it all together and then they get the diagnoses from the doctor, “You’ve got 12 months to live, give or take.” All the sudden we can realize just how powerless we really are.

I’ve got a cell phone up here. What happens if I take out the battery? It still looks good on the outside, but it can’t do a stinkin’ thing without that power. And that’s how a lot of us live our lives. We look pretty good on the outside, but we’re absolutely powerless to do the things God wants us to do, because we’re not calling on his power. For thine is the power.

And yours is the glory. It’s not mine, it’s thine. How do we give God glory? One way is what we do in worship. We give praise, we give thanks—that’s glorifying God. But listen, every time you do something sacrificial because of your faith, you glorify God. Every time you resist temptation you glorify God. Every time you do justice and love kindness you glorify God. Every act of love for God and love for others is a way to give glory to God. You were created for this. The more you live out, “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory,” the more God’s glory is seen in you by others.

That leads to the last two words in the Lord's Prayer. "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, **forever. Amen.**" What's forever?! Nothing is forever! Beauty is not forever. Hair...Physical strength...the memory...the stuff you own...the houses you own, even the nicest ones in 100 years will be subdivided into apartments. Low income housing in Arbor Hills! Nothing is forever. Life is not forever. Scientists tell us that the day will come when the sun will burn out and life will cease on earth. That's going to happen.

Nothing is forever is it? Or is it? Is there anything that is forever? The Bible uses the word forever 457 different times because there is one who is forever--who was before and will be after. God is forever. And the amazing thing about God is that he's chosen to offer you forever. God has said, "I would love for you to be with me forever. You can be." In the book of Revelation Jesus himself says about heaven, "**There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever**" (Revelation 22:5, NIV). I like the word forever.

A few years back I became friends with a young man named Matt. We didn't have a whole lot in common but we really hit it off. He and his wife and three kids jumped into the church here, they made friends and got connected. I remember playing ping pong with him up here at the church one Super Bowl Sunday. We played golf out at the par three course on north Rangeline. In fact he was the only person ever to see the hole-in-one I shot there.

One day, out of the blue, without warning, Matt died of a massive heart attack, leaving his wife and kids (and friends and family) behind. I remember just sitting and crying with his family. I did his funeral three days later. All of us were bewildered. In the face of his death, there was nothing anybody could do. The only source of hope was in the God whose kingdom and power and glory are forever. I love "forever."

When you get to the end of this prayer, you get to one final word, a Hebrew word, "**Amen.**" It means, "so be it." What else could you say when you get to the end of this amazing little prayer? You've said, "God you are my Father, and I'm your child, you are all around me all the time, closer than the air that I breathe. And your name is truly praise worthy. May it be down here like it is up there, no more injustice, no more pain, no more hunger, no more grief. And may your will be done in my life in thought, word and deed. Feed me daily, body and soul. Forgive my sins and help to forgive other people. Give me the strength to resist temptation and the plots of the Evil One." When you pray, "Yours is the only real kingdom, and you are the true source of power, and you are the only one worthy of glory." When you've said all that, what else can you say, but Amen. So be it in my life. Amen. And for today that is the Good News.

So let's end this series on the Lord's Prayer by praying it together once again, not just with our lips, but with our minds and hearts. And let's make it our aim, our goal, that every time we pray it, we do it with all of who we are. "**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**"

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