



WESTLAKE HILLS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"The Kingdom, Power and Glory of God

Lord, Teach Us How to Pray:

A Sermon Series on the Lord's Prayer

Revelation 19:1-10

Rev. Dr. Peter Barnes

November 20, 2011

Introduction.

How many of you remember the Super Bowl champion Chicago Bears football team of 1985? It had quite a cast of characters with larger-than-life personalities – Walter Payton, Mike Singletary, Jim McMahon, William “The Refrigerator” Perry, and coach Mike Ditka. That year during their run to the Super Bowl, Coach Ditka was about to deliver a locker room pep talk, and he looked up and saw defensive tackle William Perry. Ditka gestured to the Fridge and said, “When I get finished, I’d like you to close with the Lord’s Prayer.” Then the coach began his talk.

Meanwhile, Jim McMahon, the brash and outspoken quarterback, punched the player next to him, named John Cassis, and whispered, “Look at Perry. He doesn’t know the Lord’s Prayer.” Sure enough, Perry had a look of panic in his eyes, and he began to sweat profusely.

Cassis replied, “Nah. Sure he does. He’s just nervous. Everybody knows the Lord’s Prayer!”

After a few minutes watching Perry, McMahon nudged Cassis and said, “I’ll be you 50 bucks the Fridge doesn’t know the Lord’s Prayer.”

When Ditka finished his pep talk, he asked all the men to take off their hats, and then he nodded at Perry and bowed his head. The room was quiet for a few moments before the Fridge began to speak in a shaky voice and said, “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep....”

Cassis felt a tap on his shoulder. It was Jim McMahon who whispered to him, “You win. Here’s the 50 bucks. I had no idea the Fridge knew the Lord’s Prayer.”ⁱ

This morning we come to the last phrase of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples - *"For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever."* This closing doxology was probably not a part of the original prayer Jesus taught His followers because it doesn't appear in the best Greek manuscripts we have for the gospels. However, many manuscripts written later do include it, and an abbreviated form of it appears in what was known as the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* which is dated around the first half of the second century.

Some scholars believe that leaders of the early church added this doxology as an adaptation from 1 Chronicles 29, which is a prayer of David that includes these three phrases, or from Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17:1-5 which also mentions them. Regardless of the origin of the phrase, early on, the Lord's Prayer was incorporated into the worship services of the early church, and this doxology became a regular part of the saying of the Prayer. It would be difficult to come up with a more fitting close to the prayer Jesus taught

His disciples. As J.I. Packer has written, while it may not be in the best manuscripts, it is certainly in the best tradition.ⁱⁱ What exactly does it mean to affirm the words of this doxology about the kingdom, the power, and the glory of God?

I. The Kingdom of God.

When you were a little kid, did you ever play make believe and pretend you were a king or a queen, a prince or a princess? Did you fanaticize about having a kingdom of your own with royal subjects who answered your beckon call? I remember watching Cinderella as a child and being fascinated with her glass slipper, the handsome prince, and the prospect of them living in a palace happily ever after.

There's a part in each of us that wishes we were royalty, that we were the ones in charge, and that people always did what we wanted them to do. At some level all of us want to build our own little kingdoms. We want to make our families, work, friends, and sometimes even our churches into little kingdoms we control. Some people are bold and obvious about building their kingdoms while others are more subtle and quiet, but deep down all of us wish we had a little kingdom of our own.

One of the best commentaries I know on this topic was written by Dr. Seuss. The book is called *Yertle the Turtle*. Maybe you read it when you were a kid growing up or perhaps you have read it to your children. It's a story about a little pond filled with turtles who were ruled by a king named Yertle.

One day Yertle the turtle king decided that his kingdom needed extending. "I'm king," he said, "of all I see. But I don't see enough. That's the trouble with me." He began to stack up turtles to make himself a turtle throne.

The king lifted his finger and a whole pond of turtles scrambled to obey, first dozens then hundreds. On top of his throne he could see for miles. And he said, "I am Yertle the turtle, oh marvelous me, for I am the ruler of all that I see."

But there was one little problem. Yertle thought his throne was secure, but in the end it turned out to be rather fragile. "And the turtle on the bottom did a plain little thing. He burped. And that burp shook the throne of the king. And today that great Yertle, that marvelous he, is king of the mud. That's all he can see." This is how self-made thrones always end up. If it's not the throne of God, eventually it will collapse and end up in the mud.

In the closing words of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus invited His disciples to remember every day that there is another kingdom at work in this world which is bigger and more powerful and more important than any little kingdom we may try to build on our own. God's kingdom is the most important kingdom of all, and when we say, "Yours is the kingdom," we are saying it's not ours. As Aldous Huxley once said, "The necessary and unavoidable corollary of 'Your kingdom come' is 'my kingdom go.'"ⁱⁱⁱ

The doxology of the Lord's Prayer opens with a praise for the kingly rule of Christ when we accept God's reign over our lives. It is a personal declaration - "Yours is the kingdom" - which involves a personal relationship between a king and His royal subject. But I am not just God's subject; I am also His child, and as such I have free access to the King whenever I want it, and I can roam His castle as I please.

The image that comes to mind for me is a picture I remember of John F. Kennedy and his children when he was in the White House. Little John John and Caroline were small children back then, and from time to time, they would barge into the Oval Office or a State dinner and climb up into President Kennedy's lap. That's the kind of access you and I have to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

II. The Power of God.

"Yours is the kingdom, and the power...." This year our nation has experienced 10 weather-related disasters, and the most recent one was the snow storm in the Northeast. It's kind of fun when the power goes out for a little while. You get out the candles, huddle under the blankets and ride out the storm. But after a while, a power outage can be very frustrating, and it changes your whole life.

Did you see where the embattled president and CEO of Connecticut's largest utility company resigned last week? Jeffrey Butler came under fire for how the company handled the power outages following last month's snowstorm, and he stepped down because he said remaining in the job would be a distraction. In the days before Halloween, more than a foot of snow fell which caused 830,000 power outages, and half the residents in the state of Connecticut were without power for 10 days or more. Have you ever experienced a long power outage? Nothing is more frustrating, or uncomfortable when the weather is cold, than to be without power.

That's not only true during a snow storm; it's also true when the storms of life strike us and the howling winds of suffering knock us out. When the difficulties of life hit us hard, that's when we need to look to God and His power to sustain and restore us. He's our only hope. When we exhaust our human resources to meet the demands of life, that's when we look to heaven for help and say, "Yours is the kingdom, and Yours is the power. Come to my rescue, Lord Jesus."

Do you need power in your life today? Do you face challenges at work you can't seem to manage? Do you lack the strength you need for what is ahead of you? Do you have a friend or family member who has a problem and you can't fix it? Do you struggle with worry and fear over things that keep you up at night? If you answered yes to any of these questions, the solution isn't to try harder. It's to admit, "I can't do it. I lack the power to fix this." When we come to this point in our lives, we can cry out to God with confidence using the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Yours is the power, Lord!"

A few weeks ago on Commitment Sunday, we concluded the worship service with various members of our church family walking up to the chancel and presenting their cardboard testimonies of what God had done in their lives. It was a powerful parade of transformation as each person shared their mini-story of how they had personally experienced the power of God to bring about positive change.

That power is available to you and me right now. All we have to do is tap into the power source through God's Holy Spirit and allow Him to work in us. But just as an appliance is of no earthly good if it isn't plugged in, so you and I can't experience God's power if we don't maintain a vital connection with the Lord and His Holy Spirit. The power lies in the source, and the Lord's Prayer reminds us, "Yours is the power." Not ours.

III. The Glory of God.

It's possible for a person to say, "Yours is the kingdom, and Yours is the power," but still say, "*Mine* is the glory, thank you very much!" There is a tendency in each of us to take the credit and want the glory for ourselves. All of us battle the temptation of pride, and the Bible says the antidote to pride is the passionate worship of God. When we humble ourselves in prayer and point to Christ and say, "To God be the glory!" it's hard to be filled with pride. I take the focus off myself and put it squarely back on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19 is a remarkable passage which combines strange images of twenty-four elders and the four living creatures with a multitude of people no one can number, all praising God together in heaven. Glory and honor and power are given to God, and together they shout, "Hallelujah!" four different times. The Lord's Prayer concludes with this same kind of affirmation, and it ends with an emphasis on the glory of God.

The Bible says that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. On that day a lot of thrones that seemed secure will come tumbling down just like Yertle the turtle. People who thought they were in charge are going to end up on their backs just like he did, stuck in the mud with their little feet waving in the air. Every president, every king, every CEO, every movie star, every billionaire, every franchise athlete, along with the likes of you and me, will bend the knee and bow down to the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

It reminds me of the lyrics of the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah* which I suspect our choir will sing sometime this Christmas. "The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. And He shall reign forever and ever. Forever, and ever, and ever, and ever....!"

The follower of Jesus is a person who has declared his/her allegiance to the King and His kingdom, and is trying to live their lives in the power of God's Holy Spirit, with an attitude that all credit and glory be given to the Lord. It's not seeking to make a name for ourselves, or trying to draw attention to what we have done. Rather, it's having a desire that all the praise and the glory be given to God.

There is a prayer I sometimes pray on Sunday mornings at the beginning of the day with those who lead worship and the deacons who support us. I learned from an older pastor when I was in my first church right out of seminary. He was a great preacher who was from Ireland, and he often prayed, "Lord, as we lead in worship today, we would not climb on the shoulders of Jesus in order to be seen by people, but let us hide behind the cross of Christ and show Him forth, that others may see Him and be drawn to His love."

The doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer urges us to give glory to God, for He alone is deserving of our praise. And whatever success we enjoy or recognition comes our way, we should always take it with a grain of salt and try to redirect it to the praise of God, realizing that He is the One who has blessed us with the opportunities and success we enjoy. Should the moon take credit for how brightly it glows at night? It's only the reflection of the light of the sun, which helps it shine as beautifully as it does.

Conclusion.

For most of us, it's easy to give glory to God when things are going well and life is good, but what about when the bottom falls out of your life? What do you do then? Do you still praise God and remain committed to His kingdom even when your life is coming apart at the seams and the road gets hard. That's the true test of faith, and learning to praise God in all circumstances is what it means to live this doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer.

There is a song by Laura Story on the radio these days which says it well, and I want to close my sermon this morning by sharing it with you. Give a listen to what she has to say.

We pray for blessings
We pray for peace
Comfort for family, protection while we sleep
We pray for healing, for prosperity
We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering
All the while, You hear each spoken need
Yet love us way too much to give us lesser things

'Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops
What if Your healing comes through tears
What if a thousand sleepless nights
Are what it takes to know You're near
What if trials of this life are Your mercies in disguise

We pray for wisdom, Your voice to hear
And we cry in anger when we cannot feel You near
We doubt Your goodness, we doubt Your love
As if every promise from Your Word is not enough
All the while, You hear each desperate plea
And long that we'd have faith to believe

When friends betray us, When darkness seems to win
We know that pain reminds this heart
That this is not, this is not our home
It's not our home

'Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops
What if Your healing comes through tears
And what if a thousand sleepless nights
Are what it takes to know You're near
What if my greatest disappointments
Or the aching of this life
Is the revealing of a greater thirst this world can't satisfy
And what if trials of this life

The rain, the storms, the hardest nights
Are Your mercies in disguise

Remember I cannot say "our" if I live only for myself. I cannot say "Father" if I don't try to act like His child every day. And I cannot say "hallowed be Thy name" if I am not striving to live a holy life.

I cannot say "Thy Kingdom come" if I'm not doing all I can to usher in His reign. I cannot say "Thy will be done" if I disobey his Word. I cannot say "on earth as it is in heaven" if I don't serve Him here and now. And I cannot say "give us this day our daily bread" if I am dishonest or seek to grab and horde.

I cannot say "forgive us our debts" if I hold a grudge against someone else. I cannot say "lead us not into temptation" if I deliberately put myself in its path. And I cannot say "deliver us from evil" if I don't put on the whole armor of God.

I cannot say "Thine is the kingdom" if I do not give the King His due. I cannot attribute to God "the power" if I fear what people may do to me. I cannot ascribe to Christ "the glory" if I'm seeking to honor myself. And I cannot say "forever" if the horizon of my life is limited by time.

May God grant us the grace not only to say the Lord's Prayer but to live it – today and always. Amen.

ⁱ From Ken Davis, cited by John Ortberg in *Praying with Power*, p. 25.

ⁱⁱ J.I. Packer, *I Want To Be A Christian*, p. 231.

ⁱⁱⁱ Quoted by Allan Poole in his sermon "Summary of the Lord's Prayer" preached in Durham, NC in August 1987.