

**Altavista Presbyterian Church
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**“The Lord’s Prayer, Part VI”
I Chronicles 29:10-13
I John 5:13-15**

**Sixth Sunday of Lent
April 14, 2019**

I Chronicles 29:10-13

Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

I John 5:13-15

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

“The Lord’s Prayer, Part VI”

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord remains forever. Friends, this is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing and acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Well folks, we are at the end of our series on the Lord’s Prayer. It’s been a lot of fun preparing for this series, because it’s helped me to get a deeper understanding of Jesus’ intention for us; and I hope the same is true for you. I truly enjoy diving into Scripture examining the text carefully. Looking at it in the original language and consulting commentaries are my common practices. Truthfully, though, there are times when this is more challenging. And I believe our petition for today is one of those. If you turn to your pew Bible and look at Matthew 6:13, you’ll see that the Lord’s Prayer ends with last week’s petition. If you have the King James Version, yours includes an extra sentence. So what’s going on here?

Without going into a college lecture, all I’ll say is there’s a textual problem here. Now it’s not a problem with the Scriptures. It’s a human problem. There are a lot of ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures that include the final doxology in the Lord’s Prayer. But there are some extremely important manuscripts that do not. Because of this, some scholars believe the ending of the Lord’s Prayer is not original. But I disagree. I disagree because I think this is one of the most important lines of the prayer. In this final petition, our Lord is returning our focus to God. I’ve said this at other times, but I haven’t made it clear here yet. When Jesus summarizes the law in loving God with our whole self and loving neighbor as we love ourselves, he’s talking about more than just the Law. He’s talking about all of Scripture and all of doctrine and all of Christian living.

Just like the Ten Commandments can be divided into two tables, the Lord’s Prayer can be divided into two entreaties. The prayer opens with a strong God-ward slant: “Hallowed be *your name*,” “*Your kingdom* come,” and “*Your will* be done.” Jesus centers our focus on God, and only after we spend time praising and adoring him do we shift to focusing on our needs. “*Give us* this day *our daily bread*,” “*Forgive us* our debts as *we forgive* our debtors,” and “Do not *lead us* into temptation, but *deliver us* from the evil one.” Two Tablets of the Law, two entreaties of the prayer. And Jesus

now refocuses our attention, bringing us around full circle, with “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Let’s take a look at each phrase in this petition. When we pray this prayer in worship, we use the old English. So we say “Thine” is the kingdom, power, and glory. We don’t use that in everyday parlance, so it might seem a little odd. It comes from the old grammar case called “dative,” which simply marks a possessive form. In historic Protestantism, we use Thee, Thy, Thou, and Thine when we are strictly talking about God—the things that only God can do. When we say “Thine is…” we are affirming that the divine kingdom, supreme power, and ultimate glory belong to God alone. They are his and no one else can possess them.

The first object is God’s kingdom. This week I had lunch with other clergy and they shared that someone they know is trying very adamantly to get away from using the kingdom language and imagery when talking about God. When I heard this, I became as dumbfounded as they were. This person’s reasoning was to avoid any notion of colonization or imperialism. He wanted to democratize God. While I sympathize with the reasoning, the implications are unbiblical, unorthodox, and rob God of his sovereignty. A democracy works for a legitimate government, where authority comes from the governed. Lincoln was right when he said the United States is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” But this is not so with the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not of the people, by the people, or for the people. It is a kingdom ruled by a King, and God does not rule by the consent of his subjects but by his sovereign authority. His reign extends over me whether I vote for him or not.

The second object is God’s power. Now I like this word in the Greek. It’s *dunamis*, which is where we get our word “dynamite.” God possesses the power to create, the power to save, and the power to enable believers to live the Christian life. It’s dynamic, it’s moving, it’s earth shattering. It’s just like a stick of dynamite. There is awesome power that belongs to God. Most of the time this power is reserved solely for him. But sometimes, he gives us a small benefit of that power through the Holy Spirit. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a great Welsh preacher, once argued that no matter how disciplined a minister is in the preparation of his sermon, no matter how learned he may be, no matter how much knowledge he brings to the pulpit, no matter how eloquent and persuasive he is, without the accompanying *power* of the Holy Spirit, his sermons are impotent. Lloyd-Jones was right. During sermon prep and before I ascend the pulpit, I ask God to send the Holy Spirit to speak his truth through the words of my mouth and I pray that the Spirit descend and help you receive and meditate on that truth. We all need the power of the Holy Spirit to bring the truth of the Word of God home to us. The Spirit takes the Word and explodes it in a person’s soul.

That’s a concept we are all probably familiar with, that there’s power in God’s Word. I learned recently from Father Jim at St. Victoria, that before the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church did not believe that Christ was in the Word. They didn’t believe that the Bible had a power intrinsic to it, and certainly not that this power was available to the masses. Obviously, this was a major point the Protestants lifted up, and indeed, most Protestant churches today hold the view of the power in the Bible. It just took the Catholic Church 400 years to catch up. But even today and even in the Presbyterian church, there are those who do not believe that God invests his power in the Bible, and so they rarely, if ever, turn to Scripture for guidance. There’s a Facebook page that I mostly stay off of but check it from time to time. This page is for PC(USA) clergy and

it is full of depressing anecdotes. Instead of turning to the Scriptures, some clergy are turning to social media. Many in the church turn to other things. They turn to Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*, which uses biblical language but does not hold an orthodox theology. Or they turn to Marie Kondo's *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, which draws from Shinto mysticism, instead of considering the biblical doctrine of stewardship. God alone has the power to change lives. That power doesn't exist in us. That power doesn't exist in self-help books or on the web. That power is found only in God's Word.

The third object is God's glory. Everything we say and do should point back to God's glory. We are his servants living under his reign in his kingdom. We should desire that he be magnified over all things, including ourselves. Our prayer should be that of John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease." J.S. Bach had a habit of writing at the bottom of each of his musical compositions the initials "S.D.G." He did so to remind himself and everyone who played his music that the glory was God's alone. "S.D.G.," of course, stands for the Latin phrase *solī deo gloria*, which means "Glory to God alone" and was one of the five *solas* of the Reformation. Now, Bach didn't write "D.G."—"Glory to God." He always had "S.D.G."—"Glory to God *alone*." Our Old Testament lesson is David's prayer at the construction of the Temple. He doesn't praise the people for their hard work. He doesn't praise Solomon for his dedication to God. He doesn't praise himself for being a humble king. No. Instead, he lifted his eyes to heaven and said, "*Yours*, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. *Yours* is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all." That is the great affirmation of the Lord's Prayer, that we have no glory in us, that God is glorious beyond our ability to express, and the he is never required to share his glory with anyone.

And that is one of the hardest lessons to get across in churches today. We don't like to think that God is glorious above all else. Most of us agree that God is glorious, but we want to share in that glory. We want to participate in our accomplishments. We want to pat ourselves on the back for a job well done. We don't want to entrust ourselves fully over to God because we don't like being without control. That was the original sin of Adam and Eve. The serpent said to Eve, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil." We want to be like God. Satan's lie is that man can participate in deity. And so we see in society and even in churches this autonomy from God and individuality apart from neighbor. We call God King and we lift ourselves up as his dukes and duchesses. We want to be nobles with God. But that's not the case. As Paul says in Romans 6, we are slaves to God. We are to be obedient to our master and his sovereign will. Likewise, we love our neighbors so long as they are over there and don't bother us. We don't get to know them and we don't hold each other accountable. "You do you and I do me" is the slogan for the 21st century. That's not biblical. The Christian is to turn from her old way of sinning and conform her life to God. We can't do that if we don't hold his glory out in front of us. Yes, we should strive for significance. Yes, we should strive to make our lives count, but the glory belongs to God alone!

And how long does God rule his kingdom? What is the duration of his possession of almighty power? At what point in the future does he share his glory? Jesus answers all these questions in a single word: "Yours is the kingdom and power and the glory *forever*." God's sovereignty, omnipotence, and glory are not temporary things. They will last into eternity. From everlasting to everlasting. Forever and ever. God is not going to change for us. God is not going to conform to

our desires. The potter has all control over the clay, and at no point can the clay impose upon the potter. The potter molds and shapes, remodels and reshapes. When the vessel he is making is spoiled, he reworks the clay into another vessel, as it is according to his pleasure. So does the Sovereign God whose supreme will is enacted from beginning to end and in perpetuity.

The Lord's Prayer concludes with that simple and familiar word, the word we use to close all prayers, yet we hardly ever consider: *Amen*. This is an Old Testament word, derived from the Aramaic. It means "truly" or "so be it." This isn't just a declaration that says, "I prayed all these things, now God, go do it." No, that is arrogance. When the Hebrews said "amen" they did so as a response to a statement. When we conclude the Lord's Prayer with "amen" we are asking that he implant his faith into our lives, that the Spirit may cover us, and we may live in the newness of Christ. As the Apostle John reminded us this morning, "this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything *according to his will* he hears us." The key phrase is "according to his will." That is what "amen" means. That is what we are affirming when we conclude the Lord's Prayer.

And now, I'd like to invite you to pray with me. Holy God, may it be that your will is done in my life, that I may revere your name as holy, that your kingdom promise and kingship reign are in the forefront of my mind. May it be so that you find my contrition pleasing, that my tears may rise to you as incense, and that you see it fit to forgive me of my debts. And may it be that your Holy Spirit empower me to forgive those who trespass against me. May it be that your providence gives me comfort and assurance that my daily needs are met by you. May it be so that I am not led into times of trial but delivered from the snares of Satan. And ultimately, Lord, may it be so, that the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours and yours alone, from before time and beyond it. May it be so.