

"AMEN AND AMEN."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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**Text for Sermon: Matthew 6:9-13; Ephesians 3:20-21; I Chronicles 29:10-11**

**Introduction:**

Six months ago, I said the Lord's Prayer is like a rich chocolate or a fine wine or a beautiful sunset, sometimes it needs to be savored. I said we would take our time and savor this prayer, drawing out all its sweet fruit. We would take hold of this diamond and slowly turn it until each facet reveals the beauty within. Too often we say this prayer quickly and unthinkingly. I said we would slow down and search out Jesus' meaning in each phrase.

We have done that, we spent 14 weeks going through each petition of this great prayer. We have learned some things, have gained a deeper appreciation and knowledge of this prayer. And yet there is still so much more here for us. The more we know and learn about prayer the more we feel like novices in this business of talking to God. I have resigned myself to always feeling that way, to always feeling like a rookie, like I'm still in first grade.

All of us are only students in this life and so we must always be learning and practicing. One of the most profitable things we can do is read and study the prayers written in Scripture. I have often commended to you the prayers of Paul and I urge you again to read his prayers and meditate on what he asked for and what he didn't ask for.

Have you ever wondered if God hears your prayers and if He answers? Do you ever think your prayers aren't good enough to get through? Well I have good news. This last phrase in the Lord's Prayer should forever change your thinking.

**The Doxology: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.**

**Amen.**

These words are most likely not the words of Jesus, but words added by the ancient church in the second century. There is no question of course the words are true, just not given to us by Jesus on this occasion. They reflect what is said elsewhere in Scripture, most notably, Ephesians 3 and I Chronicles 29.

**Ephesians 3:20-21** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the *power* at work within us, 21 to him be *glory* in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, *forever* and ever. *Amen.*

**I Chronicles 29:11-13** 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.

This ending is clearly Biblical in content, it's based on the words of Scripture. This last phrase is a doxology, an ascription of praise and adoration. But it's more than that, it's also quite instructive, there are several important points to be made from this doxology. Let's look briefly at five important words in this concluding doxology.

### **For.**

First, the word "for." You might think this isn't a word worth commenting on. The word "for" means "because." This is an appeal, an argument for why God should answer this prayer. This is our assurance or statement of faith that the answers to this prayer are certainly fitting with His character, within God's capacity, and absolutely according to His purpose to glorify Himself.

Because His is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, we are confident He hears and answers and delights in giving His children all things that are good for us. His will is always done because He is the King. He will provide and preserve and pardon and protect us because He has the power. He will answer because when He does, He gets the glory.

What we have just prayed and asked, we ask confidently and with great assurance *for or because of* three reasons. This is why you can know God hears and why we can expect He answers.

### **Because His is the Kingdom forever.**

Because of His relationship with us, because He is our King, He will answer because of who He is and who He has revealed Himself to be to us.

God is the greatest king in the greatest kingdom (See Psalm 45, 93, 97, 145). Because God is king, it's the duty of the king to hear, and answer, to defend and protect, to preserve and love and care for His subjects. That's what good kings do, and our God is an exceedingly good king.

"Our Holy Father and Righteous King in heaven, since you are our king and since we are your subjects, your adopted children, hear and answer our prayers in as much as they are according to your rule and will and agreeable with your good pleasure and are good for us."

### **Because His is the Power forever.**

Because of the perfections of His character and nature, of what He has and what He does, He is able to answer our prayer. Because He is perfect in all power, strength, and might; because He is all wise, all knowing, all present; because He is perfect in grace, mercy, compassion, kindness and love; because He is good and only does what is good and best, we have confident assurance God *can* answer because He is *able* to answer.

There are kings and then there are kings. Some have greater power, some less; some rise and then fall. Because God is the most powerful king, His power is absolute. He is omnipotent. That means He has unlimited power and unlimited ability to answer any prayer.

There is nothing we have asked in this prayer that He cannot do. He can and will hallow His name and make it great, He will rule and reign and accomplish His will. He will provide for any and all of our needs, He will pardon even the worst of sins when they are repented of and He will protect us from even the fiercest enemy of our souls.

### **Because His is the Glory forever.**

God will answer because to answer is to glorify Himself. He delights to reveal Himself and His glory, He loves to display His glory and one of the ways is through answering the prayers of His dependent children.

**John 14:13** I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

God is glorified when the needs of His children are provided for. He is glorified when He supplies His people with bread and forgiveness and safe-keeping. The name and honor of God are at stake, He will act.

We often aim too low in our reasons for why God should answer our prayers. Jesus says there is a higher aim and we should appeal to that aim when we pray.

Don't just pray for food because you are hungry, pray for food that God might be glorified and you might have physical strength to service Him.

Don't just pray for a job because you need money, pray for a job that God might get the credit and praise and so you might have the means to give to others in need and build His kingdom.

Don't just pray for health so you can feel better, pray for health that God's name will be praised.

How many answered prayers can you think of that served to glorify God and cause praise? God brought one answer He gave in 1998 to my mind just two days ago and it was an opportunity to give God praise and thanks all over again. (Todd's passport for Albania).

This is the bottom line. This is what it is all about. This is the only appropriate goal and end of all our prayers and our only appropriate response to the answer He gives. To give Him glory.

Praying for glory moves our prayers from being self-centered to being God-centered.

All we ask becomes a means to the end that God be glorified. To the extent what we ask glorifies God, to that extent we can expect an answer. We know what Jesus has taught us to ask does in fact glorify God. He will not deny us anything that fits His glory and is good for us.

All that remains for us to do in response is to give God glory and we do that in worship and in obedience and service and thanksgiving.

This prayer ends in glory, in heaven where we will joyfully give glory to God for all eternity.

What does it mean to glorify God? Thomas Boston points out that to glorify means either to make glorious or to declare something that is glorious to be glorious. The first is something that God does. He makes angels and men glorious. But we cannot make God glorious. He is already infinitely glorious and we cannot add any additional glory to Him. God doesn't gain anything from even the best works of men. It is we who profit by becoming holy. Therefore, when we speak of glorifying God, we are speaking only of us acknowledging and declaring the glory of God through our thoughts, words and actions.

**Matthew 5:16** Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

A life dedicated to holiness shines brightly, helping others perceive God's glory. Sin, on the other hand, obscures God's glory. For instance, David's transgression led God's enemies to blaspheme. Living a holy life proclaims God's holiness; showing remorse for our faults affirms His purity; and conducting ourselves righteously in all aspects of life acknowledges His omniscience and omnipresence. Just as a well-managed household reflects the character of its head, so our lives should reflect the nature of our Heavenly Father.

## **Amen and Amen.**

This is a positively wonderful little word that carries far more weight than it's size indicates. This simple, little Hebrew word has carried over into almost every language on earth. It means "so be it" or "let it be," or "Yes, Lord, may it be so." It is a very bold word in its original meaning. We are asking the living God to give us what we ask.

In a sense this is a one-word final affirmation of faith. This is our way of saying, I agree with all that has been prayed, I am putting my stamp or my seal on it with my Amen.

Luther exhorts us to make our Amen's bold, powerful, and confident. You must always speak the Amen firmly. Never doubt God in His mercy will surely hear you and say "yes" to your prayers. ... Do not leave your prayer without thinking, "Very well, God has heard my prayer; this I know as a certainty and a truth." That is what Amen means.

This means before we add an amen, we must make sure we have not lied or been hypocritical, or asked in doubt or disbelief. We must be sure what we are asking is in fact in harmony with God's will, that we are not asking for any worldly thing for ourselves, wealth, power, honor, carnal pleasures. For instance, when we ask for our needs, we ask only what we need for each day and we will be content with that.

"Lord, so teach us to pray according to your will, that we may have confidence and boldness to add an amen to all our requests."

## **Application and Conclusion:**

Now that we have gone through the Lord's Prayer understanding more fully what each petition is asking for, we must examine our hearts and ask ourselves, do we really desire the things we are asking for. Or are we just reciting some nice sounding words hundreds of thousands of Christians repeat over and over again without much thought?

This surely must displease the Lord. How dare we approach the living God of the universe, our creator, the one who has redeemed us and has a claim on our lives, how dare we approach our Holy Father in heaven so casually or disinterestedly. It's a sign of unbelief.

Do you care about the name of God or the kingdom of God or His will? Do you care about the manifestations of His glory and grace in His daily answers to your prayers?

Do you truly sense your total dependence on Him and your sinfulness before Him and your danger and weakness before His enemies?

This prayer is directed to the living God of all the universe. It's a huge prayer, cosmic in scope, eternal in implications. We are praying for the building of a kingdom greater than all the kingdoms of the earth. We are praying for the provision of food not just for ourselves but for the feeding of millions and for all the infrastructure necessary for that to happen. We are praying for the remission of the countless sins of countless sinners. We are praying for the spiritual rescue of the church of Jesus Christ from the great spiritual dangers of the greatest enemy.

Did I not say at the outset this is a huge prayer? It's audacious. It would be presumptuous except Jesus taught us to pray this way.

May all of us resolve from this day forward to make our hearts and our lips match. May our Amen be a heartfelt expression of our true desire that God would hear and grant these petitions which we sincerely and earnestly ask.

If you are a Christian you are plugged in to 220, but are you only getting AA battery results?

It might be because you are praying absentmindedly or half-heartedly or unthinkingly or with a wandering mind or spirit, or unbelievably.

There is kingdom and power and glory all over this prayer. This is a prayer God wrote and gave to us to pray. This is a prayer God delights to answer. Pray this with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and you will unleash the kingdom and power and glory of God.

When you focus on God, when you acknowledge your dependence and need, when you empty yourself and stop being self-centered and self-focused, the power flows and the glory is revealed from on high.

Kingdom authority, power and glory all belong to God and come from God. Any real power in the church and in the Christian comes directly from God.

If you are submitted to God and His kingdom rule, if you are dependent on and desperate for His power in your life, and if you are emptying yourself of your own glory and your own striving for glory, then you will see and experience His kingdom and His power and His glory.