

**Sermon preached by Dr. Neil Smith at Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church,
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IT ALL BELONGS TO GOD

August 23, 2009

“For Yours (Thine) is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

As you may know, this traditional ending to the Lord’s Prayer is not in the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. If they have it at all, most English translations of the Bible include it just as a footnote. We can’t say for sure, but the odds are it was not an original part of the Lord’s Prayer. However, even if the oldest and best manuscripts don’t have this closing doxology, as theologian J. I. Packer points out, it is still in the best tradition. It is consistent with the rest of the prayer. It is theologically consistent with the rest of the teaching of Jesus and the whole witness of the Bible. The kingdom and the power and the glory do belong to God. It all belongs to God. So it is good and right to include it when we pray the Lord’s Prayer.

David, Israel’s great king and the man after God’s heart, understood this. Near the end of his life, before his son Solomon began to reign and to build a temple for the Lord, in 1 Chronicles 29, David prayed this prayer in the presence of a great assembly of the people of Israel:

Blessed be the LORD, the God of our Father Israel,
From everlasting to everlasting.
Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power
And the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
For everything in heaven and earth is Yours.
Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom,
And You are exalted as head over all.
Both riches and honor come from You,
And You rule over all.
In Your hands are power and might
To exalt and give strength to all.
Now, our God, we give You thanks
And praise Your glorious name.
(29:10-13)

David got it. He understood. He knew that even though God had placed him on the throne, the kingdom belongs to God. The power belongs to God. The glory belongs to God. It all belongs to God. Forever and ever.

In Psalm 103:19, David said:

The LORD has established His throne in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.

Again, in Psalm 145, he said:

I will exalt You, my God the King;
I will praise Your name for ever and ever.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And Your dominion endures through all generations.
(145:1, 13a)

Not David's kingdom but God's. The king of Israel (David) exalted the King of kings (God). The kingdom, the power and the glory belong to Him. It all belongs to God.

A PICTURE OF HEAVEN

In our Scripture reading today from Revelation 5, we are given a glimpse of heaven. It is a picture which actually begins in Revelation 4 with John's vision of the throne of God and God Himself seated on it, where He receives unceasing worship and praise from those who surround His throne. The throne is a symbol of the sovereignty and majesty and power of God to rule as king.

John's vision of heaven is expanded in Revelation 5 to reveal God our Redeemer. He is described as both the Lion of the tribe of Judah, springing from the family of David, and the Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world. John was overwhelmed with a sense of despair and grief that no one in the whole universe was found who was worthy to break the seals and open the book (scroll) of God which contains the destiny of the world and the final fulfillment of God's plan. There was no one worthy. No one, that is, except Jesus. Only the One who was both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God who conquered sin and death through His atoning death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead could do it. Only He is worthy to open the scroll and bring to fulfillment the eternal purposes of God.

The devil can't do it. He is not qualified.

The emperor in Rome can't do it.

The generals with all the resources of the military at their disposal can't do it.

The members of the Senate or the House of Representatives or the Supreme Court can't do it either.

Neither can the President or the leader of any nation.

The media can't do it.

Nor can the rich and famous icons of our culture.

None of them is worthy. None of them is qualified. Only Jesus. Only the Lion who became a Lamb for our sakes, who bears the marks of death because He was slain for us, but He has conquered death and brought salvation to men and women from every tribe and language and people and nation. Only He is worthy.

But He *is* worthy. And the only appropriate response to His appearing, the only reasonable response to His worthiness is what takes place here in Revelation 5: worship and praise. First, in verses 9-12, it is directed to Jesus the Lamb for His sacrifice which brought salvation

to all who believe in Him. Then, in verses 13-14, in a rising crescendo from the whole creation, worship and praise are given both to the sovereign God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb (the Son of God) who reigns with Him:

To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb,
Be praise and honor and glory and power,
For ever and ever!
(Revelation 5:13)

Just as we say when we pray the Lord's Prayer, it all belongs to God – the praise, the honor, the glory, the power, all of it. Now and always. For time and eternity.

THE KINGDOM OF ME

OK, so the kingdom and the power and the glory belong to God. How does that affect your life and mine?

The Chicago Tribune ran a story last year about a man named Kevin Baugh who claims to have his own country. It is called the Republic of Molossia and he prefers to be called “His Excellency Kevin Baugh.” He wears this impressive khaki uniform with six big medals, a gold braid, and a blue, green and white sash. He also has a general's cap with a gold starburst over the bill.

If you've never heard of the Republic of Molossia, you're in good company. It consists of Baugh's 3-bedroom house and 1.3 acre yard outside of Dayton, Nevada. The newspaper article says: “He has a space program (a model rocket), a currency (pegged to the value of chocolate chip cookie dough), a railroad (model size), a national sport (broomball), and – even though he is living in a landlocked desert region – a navy (an inflatable boat).”

Baugh jokingly calls it “the kingdom of me.” The problem is, for way too many people, “the kingdom of me” is not a joke. It is what they live for. “Me” is *who* they live for. They think life is all about me. They seek first “the kingdom of me” and my interests.

Do you know people like that? I'm sure you do. Even more to the point, is it true in your life? Have you set up a “kingdom of me”? Do you seek first “the kingdom of me” and your own desires and interests?

King Louis XIV of France lived for “the kingdom of me.” He was known as “the Sun King.” He built the opulent palace at Versailles, and his court was the most magnificent in Europe. When he died in 1715, his funeral, like his life, was intended to show off his greatness. He gave orders that the cathedral where his body would lie was to be lit very dimly with only one special candle that was to be placed above his coffin.

Thousands of people came to the funeral. When it was time for the service to begin, the bishop reached down and snuffed out the candle. Then he said: “Only God is great.”

And that's the truth, isn't it? When all is said and done, only God is great. It is not about me or you or Louis XIV. This life is not about "the kingdom of me" or "the kingdom of you." Only God is great. Only God is worthy. The kingdom, the power and the glory belong to Him. It *all* belongs to Him.

THE KINGDOM

When we talk about God's kingdom, we are talking about His sovereign rule over all of creation. And we are talking about His gracious and kingly reign in the lives of all who have experienced His amazing grace in the saving work of Christ the Lamb on the cross. The kingdom of God exists wherever men and women and children are living under His gracious rule. It exists in our hearts. In our lives. In our relationships. Wherever people live under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

God reigns right now. But the time is coming where God will bring His kingdom to completion, when, as it says in Revelation 11:15, "The kingdom of the world (will) become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

The kingdom, the authority, the royal rule over the whole universe – it all belongs to God. And one day it will be fully known.

THE POWER

What about "the power"?

A lot of people today are infatuated with power. They find power intoxicating. That seems to be especially true here in Washington. But it is not unique to Washington. In one of John Grisham's novels (*The Broker*) he writes this about a Swiss banker named Mikel Van Thiessen, who was all about power: "(His) office was designed to smack his visitors with a powerful right hook. Power in the massive Persian rug. Power in the leather sofa and chairs. Power in the ancient mahogany desk that wouldn't have fit in (Backman's tiny prison) cell at Rudley. Power in the array of electronic gadgets at his disposal. He met Joel [his client] at the powerful oak door and they shook hands properly" (page 310).

Some people are impressed by power. Some people try to impress others with their power. But real power belongs to God. He has the power to create out of nothing. By the power of His word, He sustains all things (Hebrews 1:3). He has the power to provide and protect and rule this world with wisdom and grace.

He has the power to save as well. Like Paul in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." For me, for you, for everyone who believes, it is the power of God for salvation from our sins. Do you believe that?

And He has the power to keep us in His grace. Listen to 2 Peter 1:3: "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called

us by His own glory and goodness.” Everything we need – no matter the pain or suffering, no matter the hardships or heartaches, no matter the disappointments or difficulties we may encounter in life. Everything we need is available to us through His power and grace.

THE GLORY

The kingdom belongs to Him. The power belongs to Him. And so does the glory. God’s glory is His *doxa*. It is the word from which we get “Doxology.” It is a combination of the greatness of who God is, the greatness of His character and attributes, and the greatness of His acts in creation, history and salvation. Put it all together, and you’ve got glory that is unrivaled. It is God’s glory and His alone. And to glorify Him with joy is the great and primary purpose of our lives.

The problem, of course, in “the kingdom of me,” is that we want glory for me, not for God. We covet praise for ourselves rather than for God. And that is wrong. Jesus said that we are to let our light shine before others so that they may see our good works. Why? To give us praise? To think or say nice things about us? To give us applause or other accolades? No. The reason is so that they may see our good works and give praise and glory to our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

The Bible is unflinchingly consistent. The kingdom belongs to God. The power belongs to God. The glory belongs to God. It all belongs to Him. Forever.

To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
Be praise and honor and glory and power
Forever and ever!
(Revelation 5:13)

THE REAL JESUS

And, just so there is no confusion about Jesus, the Lamb of God, I want to share something with you from a pastor named Kevin DeYoung, who writes this about Jesus:

The greatness of God is most clearly displayed in His Son. That’s why Jesus’ question to His disciples [in Matthew 16] is so important: ‘Who do you say that I am?’

The question is doubly crucial in our day, because not every Jesus is the real Jesus.

There is the Republican Jesus – who is against tax increases and activist judges, for family values and owning firearms.

There is Democrat Jesus – who is against Wall Street and Wal-Mart, for reducing our carbon footprint and printing money.

There is Therapist Jesus – who helps us cope with life’s problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves.

There is Starbucks Jesus – who drinks fair trade coffee, loves spiritual conversations, drives a hybrid, and goes to film festivals.

There is Open-minded Jesus – who loves everyone all the time no matter what (except for people who are not as open-minded as you).

There is Touchdown Jesus – who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcome of Super Bowls.

There is Martyr Jesus – a good man who died a cruel death so we can feel sorry for Him.

There is Gentle Jesus – who was meek and mild, with high cheek bones, flowing hair, and walks around barefoot, wearing a sash.

There is Hippie Jesus – who teaches everyone to give peace a chance, imagine a world without religion, and helps us remember that ‘all you need is love.’

There is Yuppie Jesus – who encourages us to reach our full potential, reach for the stars, and buy a boat.

There is Spirituality Jesus – who hates religion, churches, pastors, priests, and doctrine, and would rather have people out in nature, finding ‘the god within’ while listening to ambiguously spiritual music.

There is Platitude Jesus – good for Christmas specials, greeting cards, and bad sermons, inspiring people to believe in themselves.

There is Revolutionary Jesus – who teaches us to rebel against the status quo, stick it to the man, and blame things on ‘the system.’

There is Guru Jesus – a wise, inspirational teacher who believes in you and helps you find your center.

There is Boyfriend Jesus – who wraps His arms around us as we sing about His intoxicating love in our secret place.

There is Good Example Jesus – who shows you how to help people, change the planet, and become a better you.

And then there is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Not just another prophet. Not just another Rabbi. Not just another wonder-worker. He was the one they had been waiting for; the Son of David and Abraham’s chosen seed; the One to deliver us from captivity; the goal of the Mosaic law; God in the flesh; the One to establish God’s reign and rule; the One to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, freedom to the prisoners and proclaim Good News to the poor; the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

This Christ was the Creator come to earth and the beginning of a New Creation. He embodied the covenant, fulfilled the commandments, and reversed the curse. This Jesus is the Christ God spoke of to the serpent in the Garden; the Christ promised to Abraham; the Christ prophesied through Balaam to the Moabites; the Christ guaranteed to Moses before he died; the Christ promised to David when he was king; the Christ revealed to Isaiah as a Suffering Servant; the Christ predicted through the Prophets and prepared for through John the Baptist.

This Christ is not the reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires. He is our Lord and God. He is the Father's Son, the Savior of the world, and the substitute for our sins – more loving, more holy, and more (powerful than we could ever imagine).

(Adapted from DeYoung, Restless and Reformed blog, posted June 10, 2009).

The kingdom belongs to Him.
The power belongs to Him.
The glory belongs to Him.
It all belongs to Him.
Now and forever.

Do you belong to Him?

Lord, let it be so in us, to the glory of Your name. Amen.