

WPC
Rev. Ken Sunoo
November 20, 2011 – Christ the King Sunday

The Kingdom, The Power, The Glory
1 Chronicles 29: 10-13; Matthew 6: 9-15

Today is Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday of the Christian year. Next week, we begin the season of Advent as we anticipate and prepare for the birth of Jesus. But today, we focus on Jesus as our King.

I figured it was an appropriate time for us to look at the doxology of the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray, and the prayer that we say together every week. After all, the final part, the doxology says: for thine is the *kingdom*, and the power, and the glory forever.

But when I went to check the Greek text, I was surprised to find that this doxology was missing. I then looked at the English text again and noticed the same thing. How about you? Have you ever noticed that the final part of the Lord's Prayer is not there?

Actually, that's not technically true. Notice that after v. 13, there's a footnote in your pew Bibles, footnote j. I always say that we should pay attention to footnotes in the Bible, because a footnote will alert us to various difficulties in the text, either in translation or in other areas. Footnote j tells

us, “Other ancient authorities add, in some form, *For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.*” Ah, there it is.

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible decided to put this doxology in a footnote because it’s not in the most ancient and reliable manuscripts. The church added this concluding phrase for a couple of reasons: first, many thought it was too negative to end the prayer with the devil – ‘deliver us from the evil one.’ [Dale Bruner - Church added in about 5th century because negative way to end prayer with devil.] In other words, they didn’t want to give the devil the last word. And secondly, it was a way for the congregation to respond to the prayer with an ascription of praise based on the ancient prayer of King David found in 1 Chronicles. David offered this prayer when he was making the preparation for the Temple which his son Solomon was one day to build.

Let’s take a closer look at this concluding doxology. It begins with “thine is the kingdom.” On Christ the King Sunday, we recognize his kingship. This kingdom is not a geographical territory, it’s the kingly reign of God. It’s a kingdom open to all, with no consideration given for the world’s boundaries. (Willimon & Hauerwas). To say to God, “thine is the kingly reign” is an act of submission to God. We acknowledge that God is

God, and we are not; that God is king, and we are his subjects, and therefore we're pledging our obedience and our allegiance to him.

Next comes "thine is the power." The Greek word for power is *dunamis*, from which we get the English words dynamic and dynamite. We end the prayer by reminding ourselves of the dynamic power of God. God is not only a God of grace and love, God is also able to speak and act for himself. We can have confidence that God not only loves us and hears our prayers, God has the dynamic power to answer them.

And last, "thine is the glory." William Barclay says, "We end the prayer by reminding ourselves that we are in the presence of the divine glory; and that means that we must live life in the reverence which never forgets that it is living within the splendour of the glory of God." This glory is different than what the world tells us glory should be. As William Willimon says, "Any kingdom that defines glory in terms of a bloody cross is obviously peculiar." This is a kingdom that is about self-sacrifice, about servanthood. So Mother Teresa shined with God's glory in her work with the poorest of the poor in Calcutta; members of Korean Glory Church and our own church shined with God's glory last week with the Alternative Gift Fair; our youth group members shine with God's glory on their summer mission trips.

Finally, the prayer ends as all our prayers end, with the word “Amen.” It’s a Hebrew word meaning faithfulness, trust, truth. It’s a biblical way of saying, “right on,” or “this is true.” In the Gospels, Jesus frequently says, “Amen, Amen I say to you,” usually translated in our English as, “Truly, I say to you.”

When we end the prayer with “Amen,” it’s a final affirmation that this prayer is true. Here, in the Lord’s Prayer, we find truth. And I don’t mean truth as a set of propositions, or a set of beliefs. I mean truth as a person, the person of Jesus Christ. Because our relationship is with the risen Lord, we can confidently end our prayer with the word ‘Amen.’ It’s Christ whose kingly reign will come, it’s Christ who has the power, it’s Christ whose glory shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

William Willimon says: There’s something quite helpful in hearing the whole congregation, at the end of the Lord’s Prayer, thundering forth with one great “Amen.” As we’ve noticed throughout this prayer, we pray to “*Our* Father,” we ask for forgiveness of “*our* sin,” we pray for “*our* daily bread.” None of us could make it in this faith alone. We can’t pray as Jesus taught us without the church.

William Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas tell a story of a prison camp in World War II. “On a cold, dark evening after a series of beatings, after

the hundreds of prisoners of war had been marched before the camp commander and harangued for an hour, when the prisoners were returned to their dark barracks and told to be quiet for the rest of the night, someone, somewhere in one of the barracks began saying the Lord's Prayer. Some of his fellow prisoners lying next to him began to pray with him. Their prayer was overheard by prisoners in the next building who joined them. One by one, each set of barracks joined in the prayer until, as the prayer was ending with, "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory," hundreds of prisoners had joined their voices in a strong, growing, defiant prayer, reaching a thunderous, "Amen!"

And then the camp was silent, but not before the tables had been turned, the prisoners had thrown off their chains, and a new world had been sighted, signaled, and stated. There is power and truth in saying this prayer together.

Let me say one other thing about prayer. In Luke 11, Jesus teaches his disciples the Lord's Prayer after they come to him and ask, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." Prayer is not something only professionals do. Prayer is an amateur event which can be learned by anyone. How do you learn how to pray? By praying. We can learn to pray by looking at the Lord's Prayer as a model, and by reading the psalms, and

by studying the prayers of saints. The most important thing to God, though, is that we pray, that we come before him and offer our true selves. We don't have to be eloquent, just authentic.

Tony Compolo tells a story of a time he was asked to offer a prayer at a worship service. As he began praying, he became so caught up in his conversation with God that he forgot the congregation was listening to him, and instead of being eloquent, his street language started to come out. After the service, a woman came up to him and said, "Do you know how many grammatical errors you made in your prayer?" And Campolo, before he could stop himself, replied, "Lady, I wasn't talking to you anyway."

G.K. Chesterton gets across the same point when he says, "Anything worth doing is worth doing badly."

The best things in life can't be ruined by mistakes. For example, when a marriage is right, when a couple has built their relationship on God's love and faithfulness, no minister can ruin their wedding. The wedding ceremony doesn't have to be perfect for the marriage to be strong, not when the bride and groom's relationship is built on solid rock. No florist can upset that wedding. No photographer can ruin it.

When I officiate at a wedding, before the rehearsal, I always tell the couple not to get too nervous, just try to relax and enjoy themselves, because

I'll lead them through the service. They just come as amateurs, stand up in front, and I as the minister am supposed to remember everything. I'll tell them, "When you come up front, just relax, I'll lead you through everything, I'll prompt you for your lines, I'll tell you what to say, I'll tell you when to give me the rings, when to hand the bouquet to the bridesmaid, all you have to do is relax." And if any mistakes will be made, I'll make them; I might even make a few just to make it interesting. But my mistakes won't hurt that wedding.

In the movie "Four Weddings and a Funeral" – there's a hilarious scene where a minister who's just been ordained performs his first wedding. He's so nervous that he makes mistake after mistake – in one part, he refers to the "Father, Son, and Holy spigot." He's performing the wedding for his cousin, but during the ceremony he forgets his cousin's name.

But you know what? Even this minister can't ruin a marriage that's meant to be, that's built on something more solid than having the perfect ceremony.

Prayer is so great, even when we do it badly, even when our prayers are grammatically incorrect, we can't destroy it. Do we have that much confidence in God? Do we believe that God is so great that even when we mess up, he can deal with it and make it right? That's why we're invited to

come before God at any and all times in our lives: when we're happy and grateful, when we're angry and bitter, when we're sad, frightened, confused, hurt. God is not threatened by our emotions. Prayer is about honest conversation with God.

So relax, and just pray. Prayer is an amateur event that anyone can learn to do. And the Lord's Prayer is a great place to start.