

“The Prayer: Kingdom, Power, Glory, Forever” (14 Feb 2021)

Matthew 6:5-13

A Sermon by Rev. Bob Kells

Today we come to the last of our sermons on the Lord’s Prayer. This prayer is revered by Christians around the globe. It is prayed in one form or another by every Christian faith community on the planet and, although I cannot be certain of this, has probably been prayed by astronauts in space. It has been called the model prayer because it ties together every aspect of prayer and praise that is necessary for our life with God, and for our communal life together. Clearly, there is something about this prayer that speaks to us and inspires us. Just as the prayer’s plea for daily bread asks that we receive all that we need, the Lord’s Prayer provides for our daily spiritual needs.

We’ve noted that there are two different versions of the Lord’s Prayer in the Bible. The one from Luke 11 is short and to the point. The one found in Matthew 6 expands upon the words found in Luke. The reason they are different probably has to do with the way the Prayer was recalled by the writers, by Luke and by Matthew. The interesting thing is that neither version of the Lord’s Prayer contains the words we will study today:

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.”

If you look up the Lord’s Prayer in your Bible, you will find a footnote in both Gospels that reads something like this:

“Other ancient authorities add, in some form, *For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.*”¹

So, where did these closing words come from? And, what are these ancient authorities? To understand this, we need to know more about the origins of our modern translations of the Bible.

Briefly, the Bibles we use today have been translated from the earliest manuscripts available.

Two of the best early Bibles we have were written in ancient Greek and date to the fourth century—that is, the 300s AD. Neither of these copies of the Bible contain the closing words we use in the Lord’s Prayer. There are other copies of the Bible in Greek and Latin, but none are as early or as complete as these two. Some of these later Bibles contain parts of the last line of the Lord’s Prayer, but not quite the words we use today.²

The earliest source for these last words of the prayer come from a book called *The Didache* (di-dah-KAY), which means *Teaching*. Its full name is *The Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles*.

The Didache is an instruction manual for Christian teaching, worship, and church order. We really aren’t certain when this book was written—some Bible scholars date it as early as 60 AD, some to the 200s, while most think 100-120 AD is a reasonably good estimate. In this book, we find a version of the Lord’s Prayer that is close to the one in Matthew. It includes the words:



A page from the *Didache*.

¹ *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), fn. 1757.

² C. Clifton Black, *The Lord’s Prayer, Interpretation, Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 225-229.

“For yours is the power and the glory unto the ages.”³

As the years went by, the word “kingdom” was added to some Bibles, so that the Prayer came into the form we know today.⁴

“For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.”

These words are a doxology. They give thanks and praise to God. They are a good ending to a good prayer. Each word points back to the first part of the Lord’s Prayer, and to God, who is as ruler of heaven and earth. Let’s look at these words...

The Kingdom. Once again, by kingdom we do not mean an earthly kingdom with geographic territory and borders to defend. God’s kingdom is the reign or sovereignty God exercises over all Creation; in human beings, the aim of God’s kingdom is to reign in the human heart.

In the ancient world, the heart was considered the location of a person’s will, emotions, and reason. It was thought to be the center, or essence, of the individual human being.⁵ This is why the Kingdom of God aims to be sovereign in the heart—if God’s authority and influence reign there, then God’s will will be done by human beings whose highest goal is to love and worship God.

The heart where God’s kingdom rules also seeks to work for justice and freedom for the seeks justice for everyone enslaved by whatever “isms”—materialism, sexism, racism, and others—bind people in chains. To say God reigns in our lives means our ultimate citizenship is in God’s kingdom and no other. “He has rescued us from the power of darkness,” wrote the Apostle Paul, “and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14).

- Sometimes we have trouble with this idea of God’s kingdom.
- Sometimes we get our authorities and allegiances mixed up.
- Sometimes we mistakenly identify God’s kingdom with a nation, a person, or a movement of this world.

When we do that, we miss the kingdom of God, which Jesus himself said is not of this world (John 18:36).

C. Clifton Black is an author whose work I’ve consulted in preparing these sermons. He makes it very clear where our loyalty lies...he wrote:

“The Christian’s ultimate allegiance is to no party, no flag, and no country. Our certificates of birth and passports are issued by a transcendent commonwealth. It is time for us to act like the citizens of God’s kingdom that we are.”⁶

These words are true for our time, and for all times. **Thine** is the kingdom...

The Power. Just as God’s kingdom is like no earthly kingdom, God’s power is unlike any earthly power.

Those who wield power in this world rely on coercion, manipulation, force, and destruction to achieve their ends.

By contrast, God’s power is the power to create and to re-create.

- God created the heavens and the earth by a sheer act of God’s will, spoken by a word.
- That word took on flesh in Jesus Christ, bringing the power of God down to earth where God’s love healed people and made them whole.

³ Black, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 275-278. Justo L. Gonzalez, *Teach Us to Pray, The Lord’s Prayer in the Early Church and Today*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 153-155.

⁴ C. Clifton Black, “The Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9-13/Luke 11:2-4),” *Bible Odyssey.org*, article online, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/passages/main-articles/lords-prayer>, accessed 8 Feb 2021.

⁵ “heart,” Mark Allan Powell, Editor, *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, Revised and Updated*, (New York: HarperOne/ HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 368.

⁶ Black, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 236.

- Through the Cross, God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and gave new life to all who believe in the Resurrection, the power of God to bring new life out of death.

Those who do not revere God fail to understand the difference between God’s power and worldly power. “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,” Paul told the church in Corinth, “but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The only thing the power of God destroys is sin. God’s power creates and recreates. It attracts and does not repel. God’s power gives life and new life. **Thine** is the power...

The Glory. God’s glory is spoken of throughout the Bible, in both Testaments. It is the honor, the importance, or significance of the Holy One of Israel.

In the Hebrew Bible, the glory of God appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night when God led Israel out of Egypt. God’s glory was closely associated with the tabernacle and the temple, the places where Jews believed God was present in a real and very special way. Most of the time, though, glory is something human beings give to God in worship; “give glory to God” means to praise God for God is great and of ultimate significance in our lives.⁷ In the New Testament, glory is ascribed to Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of God’s glory.

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

God’s glory is closely linked to God’s power as well as demonstrated in this passage from the Book of Revelation:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created”

(Revelation 4:11).

Only God is worthy of such glory. And that is what we say and what we do when we pray the Lord’s prayer. **Thine** is the glory.

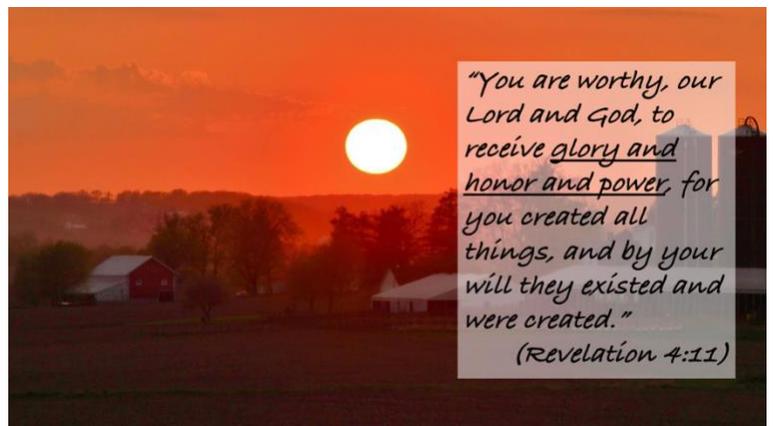
Forever. Forever is a long, long time, or so the song goes.⁸ When we talk about forever in the

context of God, we mean eternity—time and beyond time. When we pray for God’s kingdom, glory, and power to last forever, we are praying for God’s goodness to continue to reign and never come to an end.

That is not simply a request, but an assertion; for if we believe in God and have assurance of God’s love for us, we have full faith and confidence in the eternal reign of God through Jesus Christ, in heaven, on earth, and in the new heavens and new earth that God will bring into being at the return of Jesus Christ.⁹

Amen. As we come to the end of The Prayer, there’s nothing left to do but to put an amen on it, and I’ll do that in just a moment. Before I do, let me remind us all about the purpose of prayer—of this prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, and prayer in general.

Prayer changes things. That is a promise from God. We pray for a lot of things in this life.



⁷ “glory,” Mark Allan Powell, Editor, *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, Revised and Updated*, (New York: HarperOne/ HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 331-332.

⁸ “Forever is a Long, Long Time,” The Heritage Singers,” *Flashlyrics.com*, article on internet, <https://www.flashlyrics.com/lyrics/heritage-singers/forever-is-a-long-long-time-74>, accessed 10 Feb 2021.

⁹ Black, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 242.

Some of our prayers are answered, some answers are a long time coming, and some answers are not the ones we wanted. Nonetheless, we pray because we believe that God has done something in the past, is doing something now, will do something in the future, even when we cannot see what that something is. Even for the skeptical among us, there is often a sense that praying to God can do some good.

“When I pray, coincidences happen,” said former Anglican Archbishop William Temple, “when I stop praying, the coincidences stop happening.”¹⁰

When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we are praying for God to change things in our world, and in ourselves. We may not see the change we want but then again, that’s not the point of prayer.

I told a story in one of the previous sermons about Agatha Burgess, the 80-year-old widow who got up early five days a week to make meals for anyone who needed them. Agatha was not a wealthy woman, but she was happy because, as she put it: “I always get everything I want—but I know what to want.” In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus teaches us what to want.

- We want God’s kingdom to come, so that it may be on earth as it is in heaven.
- We want God’s will to be done here on earth—not at some point in the future, but here and now.
- We want to have enough for each day.
- We want forgiveness, and we forgive others just as God forgives us.
- We want to be led away from the times of trial and temptation, not into them—remember, God tempts no one.

When we ask God for these things, something is changing...and that something is us. When we pray for God’s kingdom of love and mercy and grace to come into our world, we are praying not just for ourselves and we are not praying by ourselves—another thing to remember: there is no me in the Lord’s Prayer, only we. but for God and God’s world.

Praying the Lord’s Prayer shifts our focus from ourselves to others. And that helps us to grow up into Christian maturity, becoming the people God intends for us to be in all God’s love for us.

There is still more that can be said about prayer and about the Lord’s Prayer. But for now, we will put an amen on it, and the best way to do that is to pray the Prayer one more time:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation...or, do not bring us to the time of trial...but deliver us from evil...or the evil one.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen.

If you want to know more:

C. Clifton Black, *The Lord’s Prayer, Interpretation Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018).

Justo Gonzalez, Teach Us to Pray, *The Lord’s Prayer in the Early Church and Today*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020).

Wesley Hill, *The Lord’s Prayer, A Guide to Praying to Our Father*, (Christian Essentials), (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

Amy Jill-Levine, *The Sermon on the Mount, A Beginner’s Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2020).

N.T. Wright, *The Lord & His Prayer*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996).

¹⁰ Quoted in N.T. Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1996), 88.