

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 2:8-12

Gospel: Matthew 6:28-7:4

We have come to the end of our Sermon Series focusing on the Lord's Prayer, and to me it feels as though it went too fast. With each sermon I felt as though I left out so much. The depth of meanings that this rather simple prayer offers is absolutely amazing.

The first sermon was on the part where we are recognizing God - calling upon God to be God - naming God - Our Father - stating where he dwells and of what divine nature he exemplifies - he is in heaven and is holy. We recognize him and want to live in his kingdom where his will would be achieved not only in the future in the mysterious realm of spirituality - but actually on this earth. The second through the fourth sermons were focused on our human needs - food, money, forgiveness, and protection.

This last part of the Lord's Prayer isn't even in the Bible as part of the Lord's Prayer. Some believe that it was taken from 1 Chronicles 29:11; "Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all." We say, "For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. AMEN" It is the doxology to the prayer - the closing praise to God. We started with the intimate Abba - daddy hood - and end with a 3 fold manifestation of the glorious characters of God. According to Bonnie Thurston, this part, "*affirms God's ultimate omnipotence, splendor and control.*"

This is the grand finale of the Prayer that Jesus taught us. So let us take a long look inside as we contemplate what it means to us personally. We once before said, "Thy Kingdom come," and here we are mentioning God's Kingdom again, "For thine is the Kingdom . . . forever." This personal Father - Abba - God - is at the same time the ultimate ruler of life. We are living in God's world, God's realm - the good, the bad, the beautiful and the ugly. In a way it simplifies the glorious and raises up the lowly. The sun shines on the good and the evil equally and God loves us all. God dominates and at the same time comforts.

Jesus was explaining to the Disciples what this Kingdom was like in Mark 4:26-32

"He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how . . . He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'" There are numerous examples of God's Kingdom being described in stories and parables, and they are all mysterious and yet full of hope and insight. Each portrays a journey - a development an awareness that grows in time. Things that we do in faith and in trust of and for God's Kingdom may not be apparent immediately - but will grow naturally in time to be seen, and we may even forget that we planted the seed when we look at the glorious plants. What is important is that we keep praying for the Kingdom and planting the seeds of hope and truth.

When we pray this part of the Lord's Prayer we are saying that we are ready to take the journey through God's Kingdom to finding God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom is the goal and the way. Our lives are the following and the awareness of God.

We also make reference to the eternal power of God in this doxology of the Lord's Prayer, "For thine is the Kingdom and the Power . . . forever." We have numerous references to the violent Power of God in the stories of the massacres in the Old Testament, and yet in the New Testament the references to the Power of God seem to primarily deal with the power of the awareness of the truth in Jesus. The ability to recognize Jesus as the Savior - the ability to change your mind and *trust* in a living God - these were the examples of the Power of God.

Believing in the Living God is a sign of the power of God and at the same time it seems that the only way to come to that awareness is through that same power. You become aware of it through using and trusting in it. Furthermore - it is the power of God that protects his children. Faith is power - and through God's power we have faith.

"For thine is the Glory . . . forever." What does Glory really mean? 1. exaltation, praise, or honor, as that accorded by general consent 2. something that brings or is worthy of praise 3. thanksgiving, adoration, or worship 4. pomp; splendor (the glory of the king's reign) 5. radiant beauty; resplendence (the glory of the sunset) 6. the beauty and bliss of heaven 7. a state of extreme happiness or prosperity 8. another word for halo, nimbus.

Our Father God is all that is most wonderful and radiant – pomp and praiseworthy – all the extreme definitions of the grandest things that humans can be aware of – that is our God. In 1 Corinthians 10:31 we read, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything *for* the glory of God." In Romans 3:23, we are warned that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The Glory of God is our goal and yet something so amazing that it is unreachable – and yet we are to strive for it anyway.

God is where we live – our source of strength and hope – and our goal in life.

"For yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever." It is all God's it belongs to God – it is only true and fair and safe if it belongs to God. As soon as we start thinking that *we deserve* a Kingdom; that *we are worthy* of and can handle the power; that *we* are justified in being the recipient of Glory – that is when we lose sight of reality. We are, as humans, too susceptible to weakness and vainglory so the final phrase of this prayer is not only a glorification of God but serves as a warning to us as well – that we had better watch out. God is all that and we'd better keep the focus there or we can easily be lost.

In the Gospel of Matthew right before Jesus teaches the followers this Prayer he is recorded as having said, "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

We need only see and hear the news of famous people whose lives have spun out of control when they started to believe they were truly worthy of the fame and attention that the and masses media can deliver. Better yet, look at our own lives, as soon as I start thinking I'm really something, I discover I've been walking around for hours talking to people with spinach between my teeth and garlic breath!

This prayer says as much about *how* we are to pray as about *who God is* and *who we are* in this adventure we call life. We are all here today because we find a yearning for that which is beyond us – which is amazing and wonderful and we find ourselves looking for more: more truth – more discipline, more beauty, more joy.

According to Bonnie Thurston, when we pray this prayer we have a "lens through which we see Jesus." He was a human who was highly sensitive to the needs and the tendencies of humanity. He seemed to be aware of all the games that we play and all the underlying issues that make us act the way we can – and Jesus tries to teach us how to deal with all of that. One of the main ways is by making ourselves children of a greater glorious power and placing us in a system where we can find all we need to be happy. We are children in a Kingdom – where humility and magnificence are accessible to us.

Furthermore – it is a prayer that implicates us in God's causes. We are constantly called upon to recognize God and our dependence on mercy so that we will also be aware when our fellow humans are in need of care and mercy. Somehow we are capable of seeing others in need and remembering when we were also in need – and it helps us not to judge but to show mercy and compassion. We are a part of Jesus' plan – we are a part of God's kingdom – we are a part of the glory of God and at the same time in total awe of it.

The very, very last word of our prayer is AMEN. Which means, "So be it!" We say Amen not just to have some way of ending the conversation but as a way of profoundly emphasizing the serious nature of our recitation. We aren't just routinely mouthing out words because of a superstitious belief that if we do this something good will happen and we can ward off evil. We mean it! SO BE IT! So be the protection of our Father God on this earth – so be our strivings for forgiveness and our growth in understanding of mercy – so be the awareness that God is grand and we better stay humble. God is the Kingdom and the power and the Glory – forever! So be it! AMEN!