

5.12.24 For Thine is the Kingdom & the Power & the Glory Forever 1 Thess 2:11-12

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Happy Mother's Day to all who are celebrating today. Mother's Day brings a complicated mix of emotions: for some of us it is a day of joy, gratitude, and happiness; for others it is a day that brings pangs of pain, regret, or grief. It is a day when we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Sometime Mother's Day is a mixture of all these things as we remember our mothers and some of the things they taught us or shared with us. On Mother's Day children often try to do something nice for their mothers and it's always important to remember **it's the thought** that counts. Two children ordered their mother to stay in bed one Mother's Day morning. She lay there looking forward to being brought breakfast in bed as the smell of bacon floated up from the kitchen. Finally, her kids called her to come downstairs. She found them both sitting at the table eating bacon and eggs. One of the kids explained, *"As a surprise for Mother's Day, we decided to cook our own breakfast."*

During the past five weeks we've been learning how to pray from the Lord's Prayer. We learned about the importance of our understanding of God and God's character when we pray. We shared the need for our active participation in the coming of God's kingdom on earth and doing God's will through everyday acts of love. In asking for our daily bread, we acknowledge our dependence on God. Seeking forgiveness, we heard that God's sign of Jesus on the cross means, *"If you break it, please tell me so I can forgive you."* The giving and receiving of forgiveness is the only conditional part of the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is a prayer for a community of disciples and so we ask for *our* daily bread, the forgiveness of *our* sins, and protection and deliverance from tests, trials, and temptations for *all of us*. Like a newborn giraffe we learn the importance of getting right back up after being knocked down by a trial. Sometimes we need to learn to walk down a different street, so we don't repeatedly make the same mistakes.

The concluding words of praise that we say, *"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever,"* are not part of the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. They're not found in the Gospel of Luke or in the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel of

Matthew. The ending of the Lord's Prayer that's so familiar to some of us is an addition by the early church. The ending is like the prayer of David recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:10-11 that we used as the Call to Worship. Why did the early church add these final words of praise? According to Luke's Gospel, Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and the cross when he taught his disciples this prayer. Appropriately, Jesus ended on a somber note concerning the time of trial and rescue from the evil one (Luke 11:4). The early church experienced not just the cross but also the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the giving of the Holy Spirit, and the spread and growth of the good news about Jesus even in the face of persecution and martyrdom and added a note of triumph.

The end of the Lord's Prayer parallels the beginning.

We pray, "*thy kingdom come*," and we affirm at the end, "*Thine is the kingdom.*" We pray, "*thy will be done*," and we affirm God has **the power** to accomplish God's will, "*Thine is the power.*" We pray, "*Hallowed be Thy Name*," and we affirm, "*Thine is the glory.*" When we pray for God's kingdom to come and state that God reigns over all, we're admitting that we're not self-sufficient.

Years ago, the Los Angeles Times had a story about a car accident. "A screaming woman trapped in a car dangling from a freeway transition road in East Los Angeles was rescued Saturday morning. The 19-year-old woman apparently fell asleep behind the wheel about 12:15 a.m. The car, which plunged through a guardrail, was left dangling by its left rear wheel. A half dozen passing motorists stopped, grabbed some rope from one of their vehicles, tied the ropes to the back of the woman's car, and hung on until fire units arrived. A ladder was extended from below to help stabilize the car while firefighters tied the vehicle to tow trucks with cables and chains. '*Every time we'd move the car she'd scream,*' said one of the rescuers. '*She was in pain.*' It took almost 2 ½ hours for the passers-by, the California Highway Patrol officers, tow truck drivers, and firefighters – about 25 people in all – to secure the car and pull the woman to safety. '*It was kind of funny,*' L.A. County Fire Captain Ross Marshall recalled later. "*She kept saying, 'I'll do it myself.'*"

That's an extreme example but I think it makes the point: there are times when self-sufficiency goes too far. There are times in our lives when we face situations that

are overwhelming. How often, like the woman in the car dangling by one wheel, do we try to “*do it ourselves*,” rather than turning to God and recognizing there are times when we all need some help? We were not made to run the world or to sustain it. That’s why we say “*Thine*” is the kingdom” and not “*mine* is the kingdom.”

I enjoy the stories of Dr. Seuss which are fun and offer powerful lessons. One of them, *Yertle the Turtle*, speaks to this point about saying “*Thine*” is the kingdom” and not “*mine* is the kingdom.” It would take me 7-8 minutes to read the whole story to you this morning so I’m going to give you the Executive Summary. “Yertle was the king of the turtles in the pond, and everyone seemed happy. But Yertle wanted more. He got it in his head that he was the king of all that he could see. He thought that if he could see more, he could be king of more. So he started building a tower of turtles with him at the top. Then he believed that he was the king of a horse and a cow. But that wasn’t enough. He wanted more and more. So the tower grew taller and taller and he could see more and more. But he still wasn’t happy. At the bottom of the pile, a little turtle named Mack asked the king politely if they could stop because he was growing tired and weak and the tower of turtles on his back was really heavy. The king refused, Mack burped and the whole tower of turtles came tumbling down and Yertle was once again just king of the mud.” When we try to build our own kingdom on the backs of others it’s inherently unstable. Life is not about elevating ourselves to the highest place above and on top of other people. Rather it’s about giving honor and praise to God whose kingdom we pray will come fully to earth. Dallas Willard liked to say each of us “is” a kingdom, and we choose which kingdom we will serve God’s kingdom, where God rules, or our own kingdom, where we rule, or some political or other kingdom.

We pray, “*For thine is the kingdom and the power.*” God has the power to accomplish God’s will and that power is available to us if we’re willing to connect with God. “In a seminary class about missions, Herbert Jackson told how, as a new missionary, he was assigned a car that wouldn’t start without a push. After pondering the problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school near his home, got permission to take some children out of class, and had them push his car off. As he made his rounds, he’d either park on a hill or leave the engine running. He used this ingenious procedure

for two years. Ill health forced the Jackson family to leave, and a new missionary came to the station. When Jackson proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started, the new man began looking under the hood. Before Jackson's explanation was complete, the new missionary interrupted, "*Why, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable.*" He gave the cable a twist, stepped into the car, turned it on, and to Jackson's astonishment, the engine roared to life. For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting the power to work."

We must be in touch with God for God's power to flow through us. Worship, God's Word, prayer, and service in Jesus' name are four links to God's power. If those cables are loose or even worse disconnected, we may find ourselves enduring needless trouble, difficulty, or frustration. When those connections are solid and strong, we have power for living and doing God's will.

We pray, "*For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.*" The apostle Paul wrote that all people sin and fall short of the glory of God. Yet, thanks to Jesus' death and resurrection and the giving of God's Spirit to us, Paul writes in **1 Thessalonians 2:11-12**, "*As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*" This is the verse that we put on the inside of the Membership Certificates we give to everyone who joins BBC. This is our calling, to "**lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.**" God invites us to be participants in God's glory. Have you ever noticed how sometimes it seems like dogs and their owners often resemble each other? Have you ever felt like the longer some people are married the more they look, act, or speak alike, even completing each other's sentences because they know each other so well? As God is a part of our life day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, hopefully we begin to look and act and speak more like the God we've been living with and walking with through the years. We don't pray, "*mine is the glory,*" because our focus is on God and not ourselves.

The Lord's Prayer closes by returning our focus to God with whom it began. The more we focus on God in heaven, the more inspired we are on earth. In *The Great House of God*, Max Lucado shares the story of a sociologist who "accompanied a group of mountain climbers on an expedition. Among other things, he observed a direct correlation between cloud cover and contentment. When there was no cloud cover and the peak was in view, the climbers were energetic and cooperative. When the gray clouds eclipsed the view of the mountaintop, though, the climbers were sullen and selfish." The same thing can happen to us. As long as our eyes are on God's majesty and glory there's a bounce in our step and light in our eye. But when our eyes focus on the dirt beneath our feet, we may end up grumbling about every rock and crevice we have to cross."

Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the New Testament, *The Message*, renders the closing phrase of the Lord's Prayer this way: "*You're in charge! You can do anything you want! You're ablaze in beauty!*" Yes!" As we confess that God is in charge, we admit that we're not. As we proclaim that God has power and can do what God wants, we admit that we need God's power for living. And we give God all the applause and glory because there is no one else like God.

Richard Foster writes, "*The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mess of motives – altruistic and selfish, merciful and hateful, loving and bitter. Frankly this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. But what I have come to see is that God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture.*" The Lord's Prayer is brief yet within its few words there's depth that we can easily miss and to which we can return daily. It's a guide to the Christian life, to the contentment, freedom, and peace we all need and desire.

John Koenig shares the following story in his book, *Rediscovering New Testament Prayer*. Luther Place Memorial Church in Washington D.C. offers many forms of hospitality to people with desperate needs. One of the residents at an emergency shelter was the victim of an unprovoked attack, just outside the church. Julie Goodenough, coordinator of the shelter, recalled what happened after she rushed to the side of the wounded man: "The next few minutes seemed like a lifetime...Much of it is a

blur, but some moments stand out. The stranger, a black man I'd never seen before, helping to lay Ronnie down and calm him. The anguish and anger of the crowd surrounding us...The fear of death. The stranger was calming me and the people around us. He knelt beside me, talked quietly of God's love and giving my heart strength...He led us all in the Lord's Prayer in the moments while we waited for the ambulance to arrive, and I felt the Lord's presence with us on that sidewalk. Medical help arrived. Ronnie was taken away (and eventually recovered). The stranger and I walked away and embraced and as we held each other he whispered, "*Just keep praying. Keep prayer in your heart.*" He walked around the corner and was gone.¹

Is this simply a bizarre incident, far removed from our quiet lives? Or is it a window into the way things are frequently, maybe even typically, just beneath the surface of what we call ordinary life? There's a daily struggle for God's kingdom to come into the midst of the world's pain, brokenness, violence, hunger, and inability to forgive. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, like the man praying for the homeless man on the sidewalk, so that wherever the evil one may strike, God's kingdom and power and glory might be revealed, even in response to a trial, test, or evil. As we conclude this series, I hope as you pray the Lord's Prayer from now on, that you may hear it and live it in a different way.

Blessing Ephesians 3:20-21, "*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*"

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. If you've been present for previous weeks as we've gone through the Lord's Prayer reflect on one thing that you've learned or remembered about the Lord's Prayer that you think will stay with you.
2. Think about the beginning and the ending of the Lord's Prayer – what similarities do you see?

¹ John Koenig, *Rediscovering New Testament Prayer*, page 52.

3. What difference does it make to pray and work for God's kingdom rather than our kingdom?
4. How do we avoid making the same mistake as Yertle the Turtle?
5. What do you do to connect with God's power for living?
6. We are invited to "*lead a life worthy of God, who calls us into his own kingdom and glory.*" As we conclude this series on the Lord's Prayer, how excited or motivated are you by this opportunity to share in the kingdom and glory of God.