

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: February 14, 2010
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“YOURS IS THE KINGDOM....”
Matthew 6:13

□ **“For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen”** (Matthew 6:13).

📖 This part of the prayer is called the doxology. The Greek noun *δοξα* (*doxa*) means *praise, honor, glory*, and a *λογία* (*logia*) is *a saying or an expression*. So a doxology is a saying or expression of praise.

☞ Most Bible translations do not include the doxology as part of the main text. It is usually in a footnote.

The New International Version is typical. Verse 13 reads: **“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”** Then the footnote states, **“Or from evil; some late manuscripts one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”**

○ It says **“some late manuscripts”** because no originals, written in the hand of the first author or scribe, have survived; what we have are copies.

❖ We have many copies. Scholars have access to more than 24,000 partial and complete New Testament manuscripts. By comparison, we have only 10 copies of Caesar’s writings, 8 of Herodotus, and 5 of Aristotle.

❖ And these copies are old. Some NT manuscripts date to within 40 or 50 years of the originals, and most were put on parchment between 150 and 300 A.D. In contrast, our oldest copies of Caesar’s work were written 1,000 years after the originals. In the case of Aristotle, it is 1,400 years.

Translators have a wealth of ancient N.T. manuscripts to work with. Still, they are copies.

○ 📖 The printing press was not invented until 1454 A.D., so each copy was transcribed by hand. The copyists strove to be as precise as possible, but they did occasionally make mistakes – on average, about 6 per N.T. Those mistakes are called variants.

❖ Skeptics claim that variants undermine the Bible’s believability. In fact, more than 99% of all variants are as trivial as: the reversal of two words (one manuscript says **“Jesus Christ”** another **“Christ Jesus”**); a misspelled name; a missing letter; or a dropped word. Less than 1% of all variants are more significant than that.

○ The Matthew 6:13 doxology is among that 1%. The earliest manuscripts don’t include it, and since older copies more accurately replicate the original than more recent ones, most translations do not print the doxology in the main text.

☆ Nevertheless, **“For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen”** is ancient.

❖ The *Διδαχη* (*Didache*) was a teaching document, used by Early Church leaders to prepare converts for baptism. Most scholars believe it was written around 100 A.D., possibly earlier.

⊕ The *Διδαχη* includes several instructions on prayer, including this one: {Did. 8:2-3}

**pray...as the Lord commanded in His Gospel
... “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed
be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be**

done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Thus pray thus thrice in a day.”

Jesus did not include these words in his prayer, yet they were in common use a few decades later. But tradition is hardly the only (much less best) reason to pray them.

✧ The Matthew 6:13 doxology has the potential to make the Lord’s Prayer real in and among us. Prayed with understanding and devotion, “**yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever**” can liberate us *from* lifeless ritual *for* vigorous faith, *from* theoretical assent *for* applied conviction, *from* self-centered sentimentality *for* God-centered action.

🔑 This doxology is always descriptive (it accurately reflects reality, even when we don’t see it that way). But sometimes, it is also performative (it can function to accomplish what it describes).

🔑 The dynamic that makes verse 13 (and the whole prayer) performative and not merely prescriptive is our commitment to answer the prayer we pray.

When we pray “**Our Father who art in heaven**” with the concrete aim of relating to God as his faithful, loving children, his kingdom, power, glory begin to grow more solid and real in our world.

When we pray “**hallowed be thy name**” with the practical objective of glorifying God in thought, word and

deed, his kingdom and power and glory start to take visible shape in and among and through us.

And so forth.

A word of warning: there are at least four deadly pitfalls to beware.

☠ Pitfall # 1 is grim duty: “*I will struggle and strive in executing my debt to live out this doxology.*” We do owe God our best effort; yet if we approach kingdom life primarily as an obligation we will be burdened and bound, and no closer to embodying God’s kingdom, power and glory.

☠ Pitfall # 2 is formalism: “*I’m all about this doxology: I’ve been baptized, I attend worship, and I take communion and pray before meals.*” Christian ritual is important; yet if we approach kingdom life primarily as a habit we will grow cold and superficial. We will have no strength for God’s kingdom, power and glory.

☠ Pitfall # 3 is compulsive piety: “*I live this doxology. I get up at 5 A.M. to pray and do in-depth Bible Study. I fast, journal, listen to Christian radio, and view only G-rated movies.*” Spiritual discipline is vital; yet if we approach kingdom life primarily as a regimen we will become self-absorbed and legalistic, and God’s kingdom, power and glory will get twisted into something else.

☠ Pitfall # 4 is sentimentality: “*I am into this doxology! The power of the Spirit flows in my laughter and my tears. I move from glory to glory!*” Passion is essential; but if we approach kingdom life primarily on

the basis of our feelings we will be vulnerable to deception and discouragement. The kingdom, power and glory will be farther away than ever.

- Grim duty, formalism, compulsive piety, and sentimentality sabotage our purpose. But “**Our Father in heaven**” has better for us: Jesus declares, {Jn 6:63} “**The Spirit gives life; the flesh**” (the part of us that acts independently of God) – that “**counts for nothing,**” says Jesus. “**The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.**”

- ★ Our commitment to make the Lord’s Prayer *real* is achieved – not perfectly, but truly – when we relate to God in the way ordained by each phrase.

- ☼ The LORD God can use us to answer our own prayer, when we come to him as: loving and personal Father; Holy One, worthy of all reverence and praise; King above all kings, with authority and power to rule the universe; Righteous, All-Knowing One, whose plans are entirely good and wise; generous, trust-worthy Provider; compassionate Savior, who perfectly balances the demands of strict justice and tender mercy; triumphant Defender and victorious Warrior.

The Lord’s Prayer is not about ritual, magic, effort, or even correct doctrine; it is about relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we pray this prayer in that frame of reference, God is able to unleash the power of the doxology in, among and through us.

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

This is the Word of the Lord.