

All for Him

“The Lord’s Prayer” – conclusion

July 3, 2016

⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

¹³ Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,

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

Amen!

This morning we are concluding our series looking at *The Lord’s Prayer*. I mentioned last week that there is a pretty good chance, meaning greater than not, that Jesus ended the prayer that he taught his disciples to pray with the petition, “and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Our passage for this morning, *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen!*, is not in the original manuscripts. It was probably added later on. But it still doesn’t make it any less important. Jesus probably wouldn’t have had to add it because to Him and most of the Jewish people, it would have been a given. It was something that came at the beginning or the end of many of their prayers. It is very similar to the words of King David in one of his prayers found in 1 Chronicles:

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. 1 Chronicles 29:11 (ESV)

As I said in the first sermon on this series of *The Lord’s Prayer*, prayer is mostly not about ourselves, it is mostly about God. At the least it is about the interaction between the mighty, all powerful, omnipotent, omnipresent, uncreated God and His created, finite, imperfect and sinful people. All our prayer life needs to acknowledge that.

Most of the churches that began during the Reformation and since, including Anabaptists and Mennonites, are often referred to as “low churches,” as opposed to the high churches like the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches. Most of it for good reasons – like the emphasis on Jesus’ life here on earth, discipleship, the spreading out of authority as opposed to hierarchal. But the downside of it is that it has often left us with a low, or at least lower, view of God. I also mentioned early on in this series that there really is no better position to pray than any other – we can pray standing up, we can pray on our knees, we can pray laying down, we

can pray with our fingers clasped together, we can pray with our arms stretched out – but there is one way in which we need to always pray to God and that is looking up! God is God and we are not!

This is a good weekend to be finishing up our series looking at “The Lord’s Prayer.” This is the weekend in which the earthly kingdom in which we reside in celebrates what it stands for. Around the country – yesterday, today and tomorrow there will be grand celebrations with fireworks, music, cook-outs, shows, and on and on, all meant to be a sign of where most people in this country put their allegiance. The Lord’s Prayer is a good reminder that in the world which we currently find ourselves, there are two competing kingdoms, the kingdom of this world – that which is made up of all the competing kingdoms (from the best to the worst) and the Kingdom of God. While America has traditionally been one of the better kingdoms of this world, what many in America don’t realize, including many American Christians, is that we can’t have two allegiances. It is no different than what Jesus said about money versus the Kingdom of God, “you will either hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other, no one can serve two masters.” We will constantly go back and forth, emphasizing one over the other. Jesus says we can’t do that.

In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus has defined our relationship to God and to each other. He has challenged us to work with God in establishing His Kingdom in whatever setting we find ourselves in this kingdom, and trying to live out His will during our time here on earth. He has outlined our responsibility to be content with nothing more than what we really need (“our daily bread”). He says we need to forgive others their sins if we want to be forgiven by God for our sins. And he has reminded us of the temptations of this world and God’s ability to deliver us from evil.

While the last phrase probably was a later addition to the prayer itself, the benediction acknowledges God’s kingdom, God’s power and God’s glory. Those three large words are piled one upon another as the prayer ends, in one final shout of praise to God.

But all the kingdoms of this world – whether it be dictatorships, democracies or all others in between love those three words as well. Kings build their kingdoms and defend them with whatever level of violence is needed. Politics is mostly an exercise of power, and glory is what emanates from those who have power. While we in America are pretty quick to jump in and say, “well, we don’t have any kings, the truth is in a democracy, the people are “King.”

William Willimon & Stanley Hauerwas in a wonderful book they wrote on the Lord’s Prayer entitled Lord, Teach Us: The Lord’s Prayer & The Christian Life, write this:

“Do not make the mistake of thinking that because democracy has made us kings over ourselves that the church’s quarrel with politics has now been resolved. Modern history has demonstrated that democracies are every bit as murderous as dictatorships in defending themselves. The crime rate in the United States suggests that modern democracy, by making each of us kings, gods unto ourselves, has devised a uniquely violent form of government. So we need to take care –when we speak of kingdom, power and glory – that we unpack those words, that we know what they mean in a peculiar Christian account of what is going on in the world.”

Before Jesus even started his ministry, right after his baptism and the descending of the Holy Spirit upon him, he was led into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. Jesus was tempted by those very same things – was he going to seek God’s kingdom, power and glory or was he going to seek his own. Jesus’ life here on earth redefined for us the meaning of kingdom, power and glory.

If we’re honest with ourselves we all long for a little control, power and glory every now and then. If we’re really honest with ourselves we long for a lot more control, power and glory than we would like to admit. We all love a little glory. We all long for moments when we shine, when we rise above the crowd and radiate success and achievement. We put ourselves and other Christians in the limelight as much as anyone else. Yet we claim to follow Jesus Christ, whom it says:

though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
Philippians 2:6-8 (ESV)

The one whom we claim to follow was willing to give up his own human life before the taking of another’s life. He was willing to shun all praise, glory and honor, for the praise, glory and honor of the Father. Jesus was willing to give up his entire will for God’s will. That’s the Jesus we claim to follow.

Any kingdom that defines glory in terms of a bloody cross is going to be in conflict with any and every kingdom of this world. The special meaning of God’s kingdom, power and glory during this time period – all the way from Jesus’ first coming to his second coming, is signified to us through his death on the cross and all the Christian martyrs throughout the centuries. Jesus and the Christian martyrs responded to all of the world’s violence in a most unconventional way, not by resisting evil, but by offering their own lives as a witness to the power of God. Not relying on their own power for self defense, they put their trust in God. They suffered death, giving themselves over into the hands of God, trusting their lives to God rather than to themselves. They showed their allegiance to a new kingdom, allowing no such power, glory and honor for themselves but only for God. Anyone there yet in their Christian walk?

And then comes one final word, “Amen!” In most churches today the word “Amen” has degenerated to a word that is indiscriminately shouted out here and there. Even as Mennonites we like hearing the word “Amen” shouted out every once and a while. Or for most of us the word “Amen” is a sign that a prayer is over and we can open our eyes and lift our heads, but in the Jewish tradition it was much more meaningful. It literally meant “so be it.” It was the worshipers’ commitment to do what they had prayed. It was a vow!

It was just as a man and woman were standing together at the altar on their wedding day. “Do you take this woman to be your wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do you part?” Then comes the “I do,” the “Amen!” The “I do!” in the marriage ceremony is not

the end of the commitment, it is just the beginning. The husband and wife are pledging to fulfill those words in all the years that lie ahead.

When we say “Amen” at the end of “The Lord’s Prayer” we are not just finishing a list of requests. We are giving our assent to everything we have just prayed. We are committing ourselves to fulfilling a promise – to help establish God’s kingdom in the kingdom of this world, to do His will, to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, to forgive others, and to resist the evil in this world – in the years that lie ahead.

Yes, the prayer reminds us of our responsibilities in this world, and especially to others, but ultimately it is a prayer addressed to God. Every time we speak those words, we are telling our Father of our willingness to be partners with Him. We are uniting our will with His will. The church is described in the Bible as the “bride of Christ” because we are seeking to be united as one with Him, one with God. The good news is that God is on the other side of the altar facing us and He too is making the vow to fulfill His end of the promise.

There is a wonderful little book written hundreds of years ago entitled *Practicing the Presence of God* by a man who is now identified as Brother Lawrence in which he shares of his experience of trying to live every moment of every day aligned with God. This is just a portion of what he wrote:

“Having found in many books different methods of going to God, and diverse practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly God’s. This made me resolve to give all for the all . . . and I began to live as if there were none but He and I in the world.”

The next time you are praying the Lord’s Prayer, and I would even suggest that every time you pray the Lord’s Prayer from this day forward, imagine that you are standing before an altar, and that God is standing with you, and for that moment, there is no one but you and God and you hear these words spoken:

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
¹³ Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.*

What will you say? Can you respond with “Amen!” knowing that you are taking a vow to live out that prayer from this day forward, for better or worse.

And on this weekend when most of America will pledge their allegiance once again to a kingdom of this world, we as Christians pledge our allegiance Jesus Christ and to the Kingdom of God:

*I pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ,
And to God's kingdom for which he died—
One Spirit-led people the world over, indivisible,
With love and justice for all. **Amen!***

Christian Pledge of Allegiance by June Alliman Yoder & J. Nelson Kraybill