

## “Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, Forever”

a sermon by Rev. Michael Gladish  
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Today in the final installment of our occasional series we will consider the real meaning and significance of the concluding words in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew: –

“For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.  
Amen” (Matthew 6:13).<sup>1</sup>

In one sense it is all absurdly simple: God created everything and it is all His. He owns it, He operates it, and any glory involved in this certainly belongs to Him. In fact, the persistent problem with the world is that *people* tend to mess it up. We think *we* own it and that *we* have the power to do what we want with it, and we’re constantly craving glory for ourselves over it.

But of course there’s more to it than this. First of all we should keep the context in mind. The verse in which these words occur begins “...And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” THEN we say “...For **Thine** is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.” Part of the point is to acknowledge the contrast, or opposition, between evil and God, a contrast that is highlighted in the story (told just two chapters earlier) of the Lord’s own temptations in the wilderness right after He was baptized. In that story the devil took Him up to “an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” and said he would give them all to Jesus if He would fall down and worship him (Matt 4:7-9). But again, this is absurd, since they all belong to God, and when Jesus quoted the Scripture making it clear that He knew and understood this “the devil left Him.”

This is the first lesson we can take from the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer – that this simple acknowledgment of Who is really in charge can completely disarm the force of evil in our lives.

And yet, how easy this is to forget! The Writings make it clear that in order to preserve our freedom the Lord almost always operates in secret, teaching and leading us in His providence so that it seems to us as if our good ideas and feelings all come from within ourselves (DP 174-175, etc.). But it simply isn’t so, and when we understand this and really accept it, then in addition to giving the Lord credit for the good it is much easier to let go of false thoughts or inappropriate feelings than it is when we are clinging to them as our own (DP 320, AC 3812:2 & 6206, etc.).

The doctrines even describe “an easier kind of repentance” based on this principle, “...which is, that when anyone is giving thought to any evil and intending it, he shall say to himself, ‘Although I am thinking about this and intending it, I will not do it because it is a sin.’ By this means the temptation injected from hell is checked, and its further entrance prevented” (TCR 535). The point is that the recognition of the evil as a sin gives God the authority in the matter, and giving Him the authority gets us out of the way so that He can remove the evil from us.

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<sup>1</sup> This concluding phrase, often called the doxology, is missing in some early manuscripts of Matthew, nor is it found in Luke’s version of the prayer (see Luke 11:4). But since the Writings do refer to it as part of the Gospel and do give its spiritual sense, esp. in AE 48 at the end, we regard it as an authentic part of the Word, whether written in the earliest manuscripts or not. Further, as we will see, the phrase is remarkable for its emphasis on a single critical point.

So when we say, “...Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever,” if we really put our hearts into it we can gain a sort of objectivity that puts everything in perspective, allows us to remain calm even in the face of serious temptation, and relieves the sense of being compelled by any personal obsession to do what we know we shouldn’t do. It’s like saying over and over, “The Lord is in charge; the Lord is in charge” – not to avoid taking responsibility but to remind ourselves that He gives us the ability to do the right thing.

But what exactly is the kingdom referred to in the prayer? And what is the power and the glory?

We have spoken about the kingdom before in explaining the phrase, “Thy kingdom come,” and “Thy will be done.” In summary, because a kingdom is defined and governed by its laws the spiritual kingdom here and elsewhere in the Word specifically refers to the whole realm of truth or wisdom from the Lord, which, above all, is contained *in* the Word. And far from being limited in any way, this kingdom is all-inclusive, meaning that the more we read and reflect on the wisdom in it the more we will see and the more we will recognize his infinite love.

Now it’s probably a fair bet that you never really thought of “the kingdom” in the Lord’s Prayer as His Word. And it doesn’t really work if you just think of the Word as a book. But if you think of it as the place where He reveals Himself, and where we find Him living and working for our salvation it makes perfect sense. This is His domain, His territory, the whole *realm* of His love and wisdom laid out before us – a place where we can go anytime to visit or live as long as we respect Him as the head of state, that is, the Head of that spiritual state. For it is the Lord, that is, the love and wisdom of the Lord, that makes heaven for us.

“...And the power”? Again, it’s a given that all power to do anything originates in the Lord, and yet He gives us a sensible perception that we have this power in and of ourselves.

Interestingly there are two main words in Greek that are often translated as “power:” the first, which is the word used in the prayer, and also in the statement that He would be seen “coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt 24:30), carries the sense of *ability* or *force*, coming from the same root as our English word, “dynamic,” “dynamo” or even “dynamite.” The second has more the sense of *privilege* or *authority*, and is used for example in the Lord’s statement about His “power to forgive sins” and at the end of Matthew where He said “all power is given to Me in heaven and on earth.” The difference is notable because in one case it clearly refers to a function of truth or wisdom, and in the other a function of goodness or love. The *authority* for any action comes from good, but the *force* or *ability* of good is exercised only through truth. For example, you can have all the good intentions in the world but unless you know how to exercise those good intentions you are not going to have much success. Truth empowers good, as wisdom empowers love (see TCR 86).

So in the prayer our reference to His power is another reference to His truth, but now the truth *working, acting, doing, making things happen*. Here we see that the truth of the Word is not just a statement, not just a thought or an idea, but the expression of order itself, and so the very means by which everything exists in heaven or on earth. Remember the Psalm where we read, “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Ps. 33:6), and the beginning of John’s Gospel, where it is said that all things were made through the Word and “without (the Word) nothing was made that was made.”

When we recognize that all of our ability to do anything that contributes to a heavenly life really

comes from the Lord *through the truth of His Word*, or, put another way, that it is the Word that actually empowers us to shun evil and do what is good, we can be reminded both of our need for it and of the blessings that come through it every time we say the Lord’s Prayer.

Even so, there are two precious little words in the heavenly doctrine that also remind us of the part **we** play in the Lord’s plan: those words are “**as if**,” the teaching being that although we acknowledge both in heart and mind that all the power to do anything good rests with the Lord, we are obliged to **act as if** we are doing it ourselves, because that is only way we can take any personal responsibility or get any pleasure out of life.

So, is this just an illusion? Are we not really free? No, it’s not an illusion! We **are** free, it’s just that the freedom is in the **choice to act**, not the act itself. ALL the power comes from Him and He exercises that power *through* us when we determine to co-operate with Him – which is why it is often possible to do the impossible when we put our faith in Him.

So we come to the word, glory: “For Thine is the kingdom and the power *and the glory*....”

And yes, once again the emphasis is on the truth of the Word, since glory is a reference to light, usually bright light, the sort of light you see streaming from behind a thin veil of cloud in a beautiful morning or evening sky, or, in the Christmas story, the brilliant light that shone around the shepherds as the angels announced the Lord’s birth. Light in the spiritual sense is a form of truth, the means by which we have our spiritual sight, that is, “*enlightenment*” or understanding.

The Word often speaks of glory, as, especially, in the Exodus story when the glory of the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Ten Commandments, or when His glory filled the tabernacle, or rose above it as fire to guide the people through the night. In predicting the Lord’s birth Isaiah said “*The glory of the Lord shall be revealed...*” (Is 40:5) and again, “*Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you*” (Is. 60:1). In the New Testament the Lord revealed His glory in what we call His transfiguration, where His face shone like the sun and His garments became as white as the light (Matt 17:1-9).

Remember, too, that when the Lord predicted the end of the age He said “...all the tribes of the earth will mourn, *and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt. 24:30). Here the clouds represent the literal sense of the Word, the power its ability to change our lives, and the glory the spiritual meaning that shines through, giving us understanding as we read.

Notice the progression in that prophecy, by the way: the Lord, the Son of Man, is to be seen ***in the clouds of heaven***, so if we want to see Him we must go first of all to the literal sense of the Word. Yes, our vision may be obscured; in fact we may be deeply puzzled by what we read there; but as we see the *power* of the Lord reflected in the stories we may be inspired to look deeper, and then see the glory of the Lord breaking through the clouds in the spiritual sense.

In the same way there is a neat progression in the closing words of the prayer where we first of all acknowledge His kingdom, *then* His power, and at last His glory. Although all of these have to do with our acknowledgment of His truth, the first has a connotation of co-operation with the law, since a kingdom is defined by its laws. We can think of this co-operation as simple obedience of what the Lord says, whether we understand it very deeply or not. This obedience however leads to life change, or as the Writings put it, external acts of repentance in which the *power*

of the truth is felt as a strong influence, even a strong *force*. And finally, when the outward life comes into order the whole mind can be affected by the truth as we begin to see the *glory* of its deeper, spiritual sense. And then we say with all our hearts, “Amen,” which is both a Hebrew and a Greek word meaning “it is so,” or an emphatic, “YES!”

Remember the Lord’s phrase, “Verily, verily, I say unto you”? The word in Greek there is “amen.” This is the final acknowledgment or affirmation in the prayer, though it is not the end of the sequence of thought introduced *by* the prayer. The very next verse *after* it brings us back to the central lines *in* it, where we ask forgiveness of our debts “as we forgive our debtors,” “For,” the Lord says, “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your(s).”

So He ties the whole exercise of prayer – the model prayer – perfectly together with the practical exercise of good will toward other people. Truly, truly, the first great commandment is to love and acknowledge the Lord, but the second, which is like it and cannot be separated from it, is to love and acknowledge the neighbor. We could go on for a long time about this, but will have to save that discussion for another day.

In conclusion, there’s just one word we haven’t yet mentioned and that is “forever.” “Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, *forever*.”

There is a sense of time in our ordinary use of that word, but the real meaning, quite apart from time, is *always*, not just in the future but in every moment, “day by day” as is suggested in the words about our daily bread. If we can acknowledge the Lord in His kingdom, His power and His glory day by day, one day at a time, confident in His infinite wisdom and in His *intimate* provision for our every spiritual need, will there be anything we can’t face? Will there be anything really meaningful that He can’t do for us?

The Lord’s Prayer has been given to us from beginning to end as a means of remembering and reflecting on all that is sacred in our lives, on all that is truly valuable and good. As such it can provide us with the daily encouragement we need to strive for and receive enduring blessings, often in contrast to the griefs or short-term benefits of life in the world. Like many of the Psalms of David, it also gives expression to our needs and fears, placing them before the Lord, not because He doesn’t know them already but because we need to acknowledge them and ask for His help. It is a powerful thing, this prayer. It never gets old and it will never be a vain repetition if we put our hearts into it and think a little about each phrase as we say it. Indeed, it will open up like an intricate blossom, more and more each time we say it, as it connects us directly with one society after another in heaven according to our changes in state, forever.

Amen.

Lessons: *Luke* 11:1-13  
Children’s Talk: Something Missing: What is it? (see *Mark* 10:17-22)

*Psalms* 145  
*Arcana Caelestia* #10299:2, or selections from *Apocalypse Explained* #325