

# THE LORD'S PRAYER: A PATTERN FOR LIFE

## VI. "LIVING THE KINGDOM LIFE"

April 12, 2020

*This sermon would have been preached  
on April 12, 2020 – Easter Sunday*

In his book on the Lord's Prayer, John Killinger shares an experience which speaks powerfully to the Easter celebration.

He writes:

"I shall never forget the first time we visited the famous French cathedral of Chartres. The old building, under lumpy gray skies, was dirty and sullen in appearance. The windows looked dark and dreary.

"Outside the building, I stood on the sidewalk, and felt a great wave of disappointment. I asked myself: 'Is this the famous cathedral to which medieval pilgrims made their way by the thousands?' But as we had come this far, we made our way inside.

Killinger goes on to say,

"It was amazing and magnificent! Even though little sunlight filtered through the great stained glass, the windows were a gourmet feast for the soul. Never have I seen such a rich assemblage of blues and reds and other colors. It was as if I had stumbled into a room of heaven where the rainbow's deepest hues are made. I could not believe the beauty, the glory of the place."

Reflecting on this Killinger writes:

"I wonder if some people have the same experience with the Christian Faith. From the outside it looks dull, a bit grungy, superstitious, lifeless, and restrictive. It appears to be totally lacking in fun and charm and even intellectual challenge.

"But from the inside... it is something else altogether: beautiful, majestic, commanding, and utterly fulfilling to the human spirit."

## II.

And this is the very reason for the final phrase of the Lord's Prayer, the one ascribing all power and glory to God.

During the Season of Lent, we have been dealing with the Lord's Prayer as a pattern for our life. Each Sunday we have considered a phrase of this "universal Christian prayer," used by Christians everywhere. My thought through this series has been sometimes we say it so much we forget what we mean

Today we come to the great climax:

"For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, forever, Amen."

This is almost like singing the Hallelujah Chorus.

But if you are looking for that final, glorious end in your Bible, you will be disappointed. Even if you look in the earliest and most ancient biblical manuscripts, it's not there, it simply can't be found.

Therefore, modern Bible translators omit it altogether or make it a footnote - in small print, at the bottom. So why do they do that?

These last words have been added to the prayer. They must have been added in the early decades of the Church, in that time of trial and tribulation, in those fledgling years of the Christian community when being a Christian meant life or death.

Today's finale was a response, a response of those early Christians to their experience of standing inside the faith, inside the circle of God's care, inside that kingdom for which they had been taught to pray. Not outside, not on the street, not separated or remote, not removed and absent, ... but inside and at home with their faith.

It is a kind of shout of wonder, a gasp of awe, at that which was so beautiful, majestic, commanding, ... and utterly fulfilling to the human spirit.

"Thy kingdom come," they prayed ..., and then they asked for bread, forgiveness, and for a staying power against all that would tempt us and undermine us, that we might be delivered from the power of evil.

By then, those early Christians were:

- so electrified by everything they had seen and felt,
- so amazed at standing within the structure of the Christian Faith with its expansive interior, its deeply hued colors and magnificent angles,
- so energized by the experience of New Life which was theirs, that they couldn't stop in the Lord's Prayer. It just seemed natural to add:

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory... forever."

As they ended this prayer handed them by Christ, they were saying:

"We may not be able to define exactly what is going on, we may not be able to diagram this on a blackboard or reduce it to an engineer's drawing... but there is no question this faith is taking hold of us. So how can we remain calm, cool and collected?"

Exactly! the kingdom, and the power, and the glory is yours, O God!

### III.

This is the resurrection faith we celebrate today. This is their excitement about the kingdom of God.

- They were standing on the inside.
- Now they knew what the prayer was about.
- They had seen God at work in their lives.
- They were experiencing the Resurrection Faith.

This resurrection faith is a power not dimmed by destruction or death.

Some years ago, I read of Bill McElvaney, a Seattle businessman. He was a P.O.W. in Vietnam, interned for more than three years. It was a time of torture and deprivation, during which two things kept him going - his faith and his family.

He has two little girls, one he had never seen, and he thought about them and he dreamed about them - about what it would be like when he got home, ...if he got home.

Most of the time he was kept alone in a small bamboo cell. It was unbearably hot and humid in the summer, freezing in the winter. At first, he was interrogated almost constantly, but then there were periods of neglect, when his only company was the lice and spiders; and that bothered him the most, the isolation.

"I'll tell you how I stayed sane," said Bill. "I repeated all the poetry I ever knew - all the bits and pieces we had memorized in school... and the Lord's Prayer.

"It was the Lord's Prayer that really got me through. I must have said it a million times. I said it backwards and forwards. I said it from the middle to the conclusion and back again. I remember saying it when they were beating me, and I said it at night when I thought I would freeze before the morning.

"Now when I say it each Sunday in church, it reminds me of that time and I realize how important God's kingdom is."

This is the faith that is not dimmed, nor done in, nor destroyed by the real and awesome power of death and destruction that is so much a part of our world, that we read about and experience.

#### IV.

Our scripture passage is from Matthew's gospel speaks to this: it tells of the two women who went to the tomb.

Why would they do this? Why would they venture forth to this place that so terribly, outrageously, proclaimed that everything was over?

We do not know, and Matthew does not say, perhaps sorrow, curiosity. In shock, did they want to satisfy the numbing question of whether the whole thing had happened at all?

But when they arrive, they experience the resurrection faith, and then the disciples also experience the resurrection faith. Matthew tells the story with no explanation, no justifications, no qualifications. Wham! Bang! It is there, and like it or not, we must deal with it.

Whatever Easter is about, and whatever the Christian Faith is about, it is very definitely about the experience of the women and the disciples;

- that experience which worked its way into their minds and hearts;
- that experience which became contagious among the followers of Jesus;
- that supported Bill McElvaney;
- that even now is working its way into every corner of the world, indeed, into the nooks and crannies of this city and this congregation;
- that is..., if we will let it.

That affirmation signals the resurrection as the most significant act of God since the Creation, and because of that act, the Church was moved to say:

- Thine is the kingdom,
- Thine is the power,
- Thine is the glory.

#### V.

So what do we do with this resurrection affirmation?

I remember reading about the New York International Auto Show, now with some pretty amazing cars on display. Personal confession: I could live very well with the new Ford Mustang 500 GT, designed by racing designer Carroll Shelby

I began to imagine there is this beautiful car you have always wanted. And, since fantasy is cheap, imagine you have the full purchase price in your pocket - free to spend on the car of your dreams.

You walk into the showroom and happily place your money down, sign the papers; the car is now yours.

Wow! It's Wonderful! Fantastic!

But then, the dealer begins to say: "OK, the car is yours, and if anyone asks, I'll tell them the car is yours. You have the papers to prove it, but I want you to leave the car here. I'll use it as a demonstrator, and the rest of the time I'll keep it all shined up and on display. You may see it whenever you want."

Why, you can't believe your ears! He's got to be kidding!

You tell the salesman you have just purchased the car and you expect to drive it from the showroom.

Being a reasonable man, he thinks about it for a couple of minutes; he knows he can work something out. He offers you the car for an hour a week, and the rest of the time, he'll take good care of it.

Your amazement only increases; and by now, you are angry. This is your car, bought and paid for, and you will have it... 100%.

The sales person makes a second offer: a full half-day use.

You find yourself shouting: you will have this car, you paid for it, you are going to claim it for your own. Or maybe you're just thinking you'll go to another dealer.

Isn't it funny how we treat the Christian Faith one way - a one day thing, and yet, we want to use our cars all the time?

The point, of course, is that the affirmation you and I celebrate today is meant to be used, put into service, taken out on the road; it is intended to get us somewhere.

Our faith is no good in the dealer's showroom - however classy the display, however clean and polished it's kept.

The early Church took their faith on the road. They were able to affirm time and time again that their experience with the Risen Christ changed their lives in ways they could not have thought possible.

God's logic is not our logic.

- We see things bad and we say, "Well, that's that, not much I can do."
- We see people sad and we genuinely say, "That's too bad."
- We see death and destruction and we say, "That's dreadful and terrible."
- We settle for it all as "the way things are."

God's logic is different.

God wants:

- goodness to abound,
- sadness to disappear,
- people to be lifted up,
- justice and mercy to be done,
- freedom and equality to be effected,
- and death to be swallowed up by life.

God wants us to settle for nothing less.

What does the Christian Life look like? No one I'm aware of has described it more movingly than Albert Schweitzer:

"He comes to us as One unknown,  
without a name, as of old, by the lakeside,  
He came to those who knew Him not.  
He speaks to us the same word:  
"Follow thou me!"  
and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time.  
He commands, and to those who obey Him,  
whether they be wise or simple,  
He will reveal Himself in the toil, the conflicts,  
the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship,  
and as an ineffable mystery,  
they shall learn in their own experience  
Who He is."

Dear Friends, it is  
God's Kingdom,  
God's power and  
God's glory that is our resurrection affirmation today.