

# Kingdom, Power & Glory

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     so much that is changing so quickly. And there's all this talk of the new normal, and yet we are not certain what that new normal will be. All we know now is that everything feels different.

And that can be profoundly disorienting. It can leave us feeling like not only are we not in control, but we don't even know which way is up. And for that reason, we've been looking these last several weeks at the Lord's Prayer.

And we're looking at this prayer not only to learn how to pray, but because this prayer contains core truths. It's a kind of summary, a distillation of a lot of theology from the Old and the New Testament.

And ultimately, this prayer reminds us what is true. It reminds us what we can count on. It reminds us what we can hold on to, and it feels like everything else is up for grabs.

And this is especially true when we come to the end of this prayer, what we call the doxology of the prayer, which says, for yours or for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

[ 1 : 0 2 ]     Amen. Now, even though this last part of the prayer was not recorded in Matthew's version of the prayer, we know that the church has been praying this ending to the prayer ever since the first century.

And this little piece of the prayer is a deeply biblical prayer of praise. That's what a doxology is. It's a prayer of praise to God. And it's a prayer that extols three great themes about God that we see running all the way through Scripture.

And they are the themes of God's kingdom, God's power, and God's glory. And the reason that we're looking at these this morning is this. I know of nothing that provides more comfort or more true hope than God's kingdom, God's power, and God's glory, when we rightly understand them and base our lives on them.

I know of no greater source of comfort or strength or hope. So I want to look at each of these in detail. And we're going to do that by looking at Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

Now, you may be wondering, what in the world does Revelation have to do with the Lord's Prayer? Well, Revelation is actually an amazing book of theology. Now, most people don't think about that because most of the time when we think theology, we think in left-brain terms.

[ 2 : 2 0 ]     We think of systematic doctrines that are logically laid out, presuppositions and inferences that reflect what we know to be true in Scripture.

And that is certainly a hugely important part of theology. But the book of Revelation is theology for the right brain. The book of Revelation is filled with rich images and fantastic scenes unfolding, visions.

It's filled with drama and poetry. It paints a theological picture for our right brains. And so it's a fantastic source for understanding God's kingdom and power and glory.

And specifically, we see those in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. God gives the Apostle John a vision where he's taken up into the heavenly throne room and he joins into a worship service that is already underway.

And in this vision, God's kingdom and power and glory are put on full display. So we're going to look at these chapters to understand this ending to the Lord's Prayer and why it offers such great comfort to us.

[ 3 : 28 ] Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word and we thank you for your kingdom and your power and your glory. And we thank you for this prayer that's been handed down to us from Jesus.

And we pray that we would more deeply and accurately understand it as we look at it this morning. And we pray that through that, we would come into a deeper relationship with you, that we would fall more in love with you, Lord, through your word.

We pray this in your son's holy name. Amen. So first of all, let's look at God's kingdom as we see it unfolding here. In the book of Revelation, when it opens, we learn that John at this point in his life is living in exile on the Isle of Patmos.

And he is no doubt feeling extremely disoriented and out of control, probably like many of us are right now. And so God gives John a vision to reorient him, to remind him of what is ultimately true, despite what his life looks like in the moment.

And in this vision, John enters into this heavenly worship service that's already underway. And verse two tells us that the first thing John sees is a throne. He sees a throne.

[ 4 : 41 ] And it says there is one seated on the throne. And the thing that he realizes is that everyone and everything in this room is centered around this throne.

This throne is the center of everything. And what we realize looking at this image is that this throne and the one seated on the throne, this throne is the center of everything.

It's the center of the world. It's the center of everything that exists. And it's the source of all authority. So all human thrones, all human governments, all human leaders, whether they're presidents or kings or queens or CEOs or parents or teachers or coaches, anyone with any kind of authority is merely a reflection or a shadow of this throne.

This is the embodiment of true authority. And so John recognizes this. And then it says in verses nine and 10, that the elders who are surrounding the throne, they're worshipping the one seated on the throne.

They're singing praises to God. And then it says they're casting their crowns down before the throne. Now that's very important. When I ask, what is this showing us?

[ 6 : 00 ] Well, this is showing us how life is meant to work, how the world is meant to function. So think of our solar system and think about all of these massive bodies moving through space.

And if you've ever seen a model of the solar system, you see that there's incredible precision. There's incredible order to the solar system. And the question is raised, well, why or how could all of these planets be moving in such a beautiful choreography, nothing ever bumping or slamming into each other, all of these planets moving in perfect time with all of the other ones.

And the reason there's such order is because they're all centered on the same thing. And in that case, the sun, they're all oriented toward the sun. And because of that, they move in perfect harmony with one another.

Without that center, without that common central point, all of these, there would be no solar system. Things would be crashing into each other. The beautiful order would give way to chaos.

And this is a way of understanding why our world is the way it is. Why human beings are always crashing into each other. Why our agendas are always in conflict with someone else's agenda.

[ 7 : 16 ] Why there is so much fighting and conflict and violence and injustice and poverty and hate and discrimination in the world. Why these things exist is because human beings have lost our common center.

We're no longer that solar system of precision and harmony and order. We have no center. Or a better way to think of it is we all have a different center. We all have something around which we orbit.

Something that has taken the throne of our lives. And that's different for all of us. So our orbits are constantly changing. Sometimes, as I think about my own life, sometimes my needs take the central place in my life.

My needs take over and they're driving my decisions. Sometimes our fears claim the throne. And sometimes our fears take that central place in our lives.

They take over. Sometimes our desires, they take over. And they're driving us in our lives. Sometimes our desires become that central thing. But whatever sits on the throne of your life will define you.

[ 8 : 21 ] Whatever sits on the throne of your life will define you. Now, what does this have to do with the Lord's Prayer? Well, every time we pray the Lord's Prayer and every time we pray your kingdom, every time we pray yours is the kingdom or thine is the kingdom, we are, in a sense, casting our crown at the foot of this throne.

With those words, we are ultimately saying to God, my life doesn't work when I'm the center of it. Because that's not how it was designed to work.

My life doesn't work if my needs are the center of it, if my fears are the center of it, if my desires are the center of it. My life doesn't work. Not only does my life not work, my relationships don't work.

I lose my way. And so what we're saying with that prayer, thine is the kingdom, yours is the kingdom, God. We're saying, I need you, God, to sit on the throne of my life.

I need you to be the center of my solar system and bring everything into harmony and order. I need you to be the one to do that. And so what that means is taking all of our needs and all of our fears and all of our desires and putting them under the authority of God, casting our crowns down at the foot of his throne.

[ 9 : 46 ] So every time you pray the Lord's prayer and you say, thine is the kingdom, I encourage you to envision this throne and envision yourself casting your crown down before this throne.

That's what you're saying. So that's the first theme, God's kingdom, God's kingship, God's throne. The second thing we pray is, yours is the power.

Thine is the power. And the symbol of God's power in Revelation, in this place in Revelation is a scroll. In verse one of chapter five, it says, then I saw in the right hand of him who is seated on the throne, a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

So God is holding a scroll in his right hand. And it says this scroll is covered in writing. Both sides have been absolutely covered, top to bottom, front and back with writing.

And in John's vision, this scroll represents all of history. It represents all of the events that have unfolded since the creation of the universe.

[ 10 : 55 ] Everything that has happened, everything that is happening, everything that will happen, it's all written down here. And in the Bible, this scroll that represents all of history is in God's right hand.

And in the Bible, your right hand, that is the hand of authority. That's the hand of kingship. That's the hand of strength. And so what this image shows us, again, right brain theology, what this is teaching us visually is that God has authority over all of history.

God holds all of history in his right hand. And that makes sense that God would have authority over history because God is the author of history.

And so it's the kind of authority that only an author can have. And I think this is something that we need to be reminded of every single day. Because I think more often than not, it seems like no one is in control.

It seems like there is no one who has authority over history. No one who has authority over the events in our lives. I mean, from our perspective, life most of the time feels utterly random and completely meaningless.

[ 12 : 10 ] When we hear especially, or when we hear of people suffering or facing senseless tragedy, or when we ourselves experience suffering or senseless tragedy, when we can't make sense of it, when it seems random, it's easy to look at all of life and to say, this is all random and meaningless.

No one's in charge. No one's calling the shots. And it's natural in times like that to begin to wonder, where is God in all of this? Or how could God let something like this happen to me?

And these are questions that if we're honest, I think we ask all the time in our lives. But when we pray, yours is the kingdom and the power, we're talking about God's sovereignty over history.

God's power enacted all throughout history. Now, this is utterly unique because there are a lot of philosophies out there that tend more toward fatalism or determinism.

They say that the end, that the direction of history and the end of history and our end is more or less fixed and our choices don't really matter. So they say that our destiny is more or less determined despite our choices.

[ 13 : 20 ] You can try to fight your fate, you can try to fight your destiny, but destiny will win every time. There are other worldviews and philosophies that go in the opposite direction. They tend to lean more towards emphasizing free will.

So they say that our choices do determine the outcome and that we hold our destiny in our hands and we have the power to write our own story. And so they say, instead of saying that our destiny is determined despite our choices, they say our destiny is determined because of our choices.

All right, so these are the two sort of categories that we see in terms of worldview. But what the scroll in heaven shows us, the scroll in God's right hand shows us something else.

Because the God that we worship is the author of history, Christians have a much more beautiful and nuanced and I think balanced understanding of how history works.

Because what we believe is that God has such control over history. He has such control over history and yet he is so intimately involved in our lives that our destiny is determined through our choices.

[ 14 : 35 ] So on the one hand, we believe that our choices matter. They make a difference. They shape our lives. They shape the world. There are real consequences and implications.

They do have an impact and we are responsible for our choices. And yet on the other hand, God is directing all of these courses and outcomes and God is continually weaving everything together like a great tapestry.

If you've ever played chess against somebody who's really good, if you've ever played chess against a chess master, you realize that as the game progresses, you are free to make whatever choices you want.

You can move whatever pieces on the board you want and use whatever strategy you want. But no matter what you do, if you're playing against a true master, no matter what you do, eventually all of those moves will lead one after another into checkmate.

And it feels as though all of the decisions that you made were ultimately only contributing to that checkmate. But that's what it means to play with somebody who is really in control of the board and they understand all of the pieces and all of the movements in a way that we don't.

[ 15 : 46 ] And it's the same when it comes to God and history. No matter how much evil gets thrown at God, no matter how much rebellion gets thrown at God, no matter how much human beings turn their backs on God and ignore God and live in the world that God made and act as though he doesn't exist, no matter how much we do this, it all gets folded into a sequence of events that will one day lead to a new heavens and a new earth and a God who stands before us and with compassion and empathy beyond all understanding wipes every tear away from our eyes.

That's the Christian hope. So when we pray the Lord's Prayer and when we say, yours is the power, think of that scroll.

Think of the fact that that scroll of history is in God's right hand. No matter how hard life gets, no matter how meaningless it all seems, God is in control.

And whatever you're facing right now, even if it doesn't make sense, even if it looks like total chaos, God is in control. And we know how the story ends. So that's God's kingdom and then God's power.

But now we want to look at this third theme, God's glory. In John's vision, the scroll is in God's right hand, but the problem is that the scroll is sealed shut.

[ 17 : 13 ] And an angel says that they need someone to come and open the scroll. And based on what we just said, what that means is they need someone who is worthy enough to enact God's plan in history, someone to open the scroll, to bring it all to bear.

And John realizes that there's no one, or so he thinks, who can do that. And so he begins to weep. Because what hope is there for all of the suffering in the world?

What hope is there for all of the injustice and the racism and the violence and the war? And what hope for resolution do we have in the world that we live in if no one can open the scroll, if no one can enact God's plan?

And so John begins to weep. And then Jesus arrives. And you say, well, where was Jesus all along? He wasn't there in the beginning of the scene, and all of a sudden, Jesus arrives.

And this is a bit of a sidebar, but because this is Ascension Sunday, and we on this day, and actually a few days ago, we celebrate after Jesus conquers sin and death, through his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus then ascends to the throne of heaven.

[ 18 : 31 ] And so on this day, we remember and celebrate the ascension of Christ. Well, Revelation 4 and 5 shows us the ascension from the perspective of heaven. Right?

So in Acts, the disciples see Jesus ascend and depart from them. But in Revelation, John is able to, through this vision, witness Jesus arriving in the heavenly throne room.

This is the ascended Christ. And we know that because in verse 5, one of the elders says, weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered.

He's conquered sin and death. He's accomplished God's plan on the cross and in the tomb so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

So John is exuberant and John turns expecting to see Jesus as this ferocious lion of Judah. But then something bizarre happens. John doesn't see a lion.

[ 19 : 27 ] John turns and he sees a lamb. It says he sees a lamb in verse 6, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain. Now in ancient literature, when it comes to symbolism, lions and lambs are basically opposites.

Lions represent strength. They represent royalty. They represent power. Lambs are the opposite. Lambs represent weakness and powerlessness.

And so the question of this whole section is, which is he? Which is he? Is he, as the elder said, the lion of Judah, the ferocious lion?

Or is he, as John sees, the helpless lamb? And of course, the answer is, Jesus Christ is both. He's both the lion and the lamb.

And this is the great paradox of the Christian gospel. You know, I think this is the thing that sets Christianity apart from any other religion or philosophy or worldview out there. It's one of the reasons that I first came to faith as a Christian.

[ 20 : 34 ] The lion is the lamb. If you want to see God's glory, if you want to see the jaw-dropping, awe-inspiring radiance of God's character on display, look at the cross where the lion became a lamb.

On the cross, the judge took on the judgment that was meant for the world. On the cross, the conqueror allowed himself to be conquered for the sake of the world.

On the cross, the king allowed his coronation to become a crucifixion for the sake of the world. The cross turns our whole idea of glory completely upside down.

It completely flips everything on its head because we live in a culture of self-glorification and self-exaltation. We worship wealth and status and success and influence and celebrity.

And yet God, in a world like ours, God reveals his glory on the hardwood of the cross. which is a place of humiliation and torture.

[ 21 : 49 ] But there we see what true glory is. Not self-exaltation, but self-donation. An act of love.

Jesus Christ, who lived the life that we should have lived, who was then willing to die the death that we deserve to die, His glory was His willingness to give everything up for us because He loves us.

And this shows us what true glory really is. So when we pray in the Lord's Prayer, yours is the glory. Think of the cross. Think of the cross of Christ.

And when we pray this prayer in the Lord's Prayer, it's an opportunity not only for us to praise and worship God who is glory, God to whom all glory belongs.

We're not only able to praise and worship the God and the glory of the cross, but we are also affirming this definition of glory over and above that of our culture. So God's glory is reflected in us when we take up our cross.

[ 23 : 02 ] when we're willing to follow Jesus faithfully even when it costs us. When we're willing to give our lives to Him. And then when we're willing to give ourselves to loving and serving our neighbors and the people who God puts in our lives.

When we do those things, God's glory is reflected in us. God's glory is reflected all throughout the world. It's reflected like the moon reflects the light of the sun. It's reflected in the everyday courage of healthcare professionals who are risking their lives right now to treat people who are sick.

It's reflected in people who are giving financially to support people who have been adversely affected by this pandemic and the loss of their jobs. It's reflected in people who are out on the street handing out masks to people who need them.

People who live on the street who don't have access to things like that. It's reflected in people who are delivering food and making sure that everyone has enough to eat.

It's reflected in people who are simply taking the time to check in on their neighbors and to make sure that they're okay. In all of these things, most of these people will never have their name in lights. They'll never have their name in the news.

[ 24 : 17 ] And yet in these quiet, often unrecognized acts of sacrifice, they are reflecting the very heart of the God of the universe. that's true glory.

So to bring all of this together, life is unpredictable at best. And I think in the coming months and years, it's going to be a whole lot more of uncertainty.

And a whole lot is going to change. And there will be a new normal. And we're not sure what that new normal is going to be. And there's not a lot to hold on to right now. But this final statement of praise in the Lord's Prayer gives us three things that are eternally true no matter what else happens.

God's kingdom. God sits on the throne of the world. God's power. He holds all of history in his right hand. God's glory.

The lion became a lamb to save humanity. I don't think there's any greater source of comfort to be found anywhere in the world.

[ 25 : 25 ] And when you pray, and when you pray the Lord's Prayer, if you believe these things to be true, then say to God when you're done praying, Amen. Which is as important as every other word in this prayer because it's our way of saying to God, I am more certain of your promises.

And I am more certain of your character. And I am more certain of the truths in this prayer than I am of anything else in my life. Amen says God. You and your character and your promises, those are the foundation of my life.

Amen. Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you. And now we ask that these things that are in our minds, these realities that we're holding in our minds would make the long journey into our hearts.

And we pray that that would be aided by the power of your Holy Spirit. We pray that you would plant these truths, God's kingship and kingdom, God's power and God's glory so deeply in our hearts that they would be the center, that they would define and redefine our perspective and even how we make sense of this day.

And we pray this, Lord, for our good and for your glory in your Son's name. Amen. Amen.

[ 26 : 47 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. That song of Wayne