

We affirm God's Praise

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to read in the scriptures now, and in two places again this evening we're going to read. We're concluding our brief series on prayer from the Lord's Prayer, and I want to read this evening in two places.

First of all, in the Old Testament, in 1 Chronicles, chapter 29. If you have one of our church visitors' Bibles, you'll find that, I think, on page 357. And then we're back in Matthew, chapter 6, at the famous passage of the Lord's Prayer.

That's page 811, if you have one of our church Bibles. So, page 357 and 811, and I'm going to read from 1 Chronicles, chapter 29, at verse 10.

And it's the prayer of King David, just towards the very end of his life, as he oversaw the people bringing freely their offerings for the building of the temple, which God had promised, not that David should build, but that indeed his son Solomon would be the builder of.

And here's David's prayer, verse 10. David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly.

And David said, Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.

[1 : 24] 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. Both riches and honors come from you, and you rule over all.

In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

Flip over then to Matthew chapter 6. And we'll read together once again these very familiar words of our Lord Jesus, beginning at verse 7.

When you pray, said Jesus, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles, the pagans do. For they think they'll be heard for their many words.

[2 : 33] Do not be like them. For your Father knows what you need before you ask him. You then pray like this. Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. And you'll see the little number 5 there gives us the footnote, which is not there in all manuscripts, but is there in some.

Deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Amen.

May God bless his word to us. Well do open your Bibles with you once again at that passage.

Matthew chapter 6, and at verse 9.

[3 : 45] And let's pray together. Lord, teach us how to pray. We thank you, Lord, that through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour, we can pray.

That you've called out to us in him, and that you call us to answer to you, in him and through him.

So Lord, now teach us, we pray. Help us. That we might know how in our hearts to vocalize with our mouths prayers that are fitting in your sight.

For we ask it in his name. Amen. How do we pray? Well, fifth and last of this little series, when we pray, and in praying, we affirm God's praise.

And we do so in Jesus. The doxology, that last little bit of the Lord's Prayer, is relegated in our version of the Bible, the church ones anyway, to a footnote.

[5 : 07] That's because it's not there in some of the ancient manuscripts of the scriptures, and therefore, scholars argue a little bit about whether it should or shouldn't be included.

Leon Morris, a very fine scholar, in fact I quoted him this morning, Leon Morris says, actually there's much better evidence for its presence than is often admitted.

But let's not be worried about that, because whether or not Jesus taught at this particular point these words is hardly what matters. These words are certainly thoroughly biblical. We read that prayer from the end of King David's life, as he anticipated the building of the Lord's Temple. And so, it's a very fitting way to add very similar words to that to the end of this, the Lord's Prayer.

And we end the Lord's Prayer, therefore, as we should end all of our prayers with an affirmation of praise to God through Jesus Christ, the Son, through Jesus our Lord.

[6 : 18] That's what a doxology is. It's just a posh word meaning to ascribe praise, to affirm praise. To affirm just means to give solemn assent to something, to declare the truth about something.

You affirm the truth of a witness statement in the witness box. And what we're seeing in this doxology is simply that everything that we pray, we pray on the basis of the truth about God's Kingdom and His power and His glory as it is made known to us in Jesus Christ.

We can pray for, notice that word, for the Kingdom and the power and the glory are God's forever through what Jesus, God the Son, has done.

And that's what we're saying Amen to when we say Amen at the end of our prayers. Sometimes people forget that. They rather think that the Lord's Prayer is a sort of generic prayer that you can trot out on any sort of occasion, a state occasion.

It's the sort of prayer that can be used for every religion or all religions or people of no religion. But I think we've already seen, haven't we, that nothing could possibly be further from the truth.

[7 : 31] You can't take this prayer, this teaching of Jesus, right out of Matthew's Gospel and act as though it just stood on its own. Of course not. It comes right here in the middle of Jesus' teaching about his own kingdom and what it means.

Matthew's Gospel begins with the story of the birth of one who was born to be king. Jesus' very first words when he takes the public stage in his own teaching are the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The kingdom is in the midst of you, he said. Meaning that as he stood in the midst of them, the presence of God's kingdom is felt there. It comes to its final consummation of glory only when Jesus himself personally returns to judge the world and to reign forever.

That's what he talks about in Matthew chapter 24 when he comes with the clouds in power and great glory. And so we pray all that Jesus has taught us to pray in these words here for all of this is true in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen. You see, that means it's a prayer for kingdom people.

[8 : 59] People who belong to Jesus' kingdom who know and who rejoice in that and who therefore share in the kingdom of God the Father through the saving work of God the Son. Read on to Matthew chapter 11 and you'll see Jesus says no one knows the Father, no one except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

And so this doxology affirms our praise for God the Father through Jesus the Son in whom God the Father has made himself known to us and no other way.

I want to take these two parts of the doxology and think about them together. First of all, let's begin at the end with that word Amen. Let me put it this way. In the doxology and what we say at the end of our prayers, we are affirming our praise to God's name as it's made known ultimately in Jesus. Affirming our praise to God's name made known in Jesus. Now Amen is a Hebrew word. It derives from a word that gives us the words truth or truthfulness or faithfulness.

So it's an affirmation of the inevitable as well as of the desirable. So let it be. So shall it be. That's what you're saying when you say Amen. Psalm 72 begins like this.

[10 : 31] Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to your royal son. It's a prophetic psalm. It's a messianic psalm speaking about the great king who is to come as the son of David who would reign, who would endure forever and in whom and through whom all the nations would be blessed.

Blessed be your glorious name. That is God's name as this comes to pass. May the whole earth be filled with your glory. That's how the psalm ends.

Amen and Amen. So let it be. It's hard to know whether the psalmist there is meaning God's glory will fill the whole earth or that the glory of his king will fill the whole earth.

But in fact that's the point because it's both. God's glory filling the earth is in the glory of his son the Lord Jesus Christ the king. His name is God's name.

And that's what the psalmist is saying Amen to. So let it be. That's a great message of the whole of the New Testament scriptures. When we say Amen to our prayers we're just affirming exactly that. [11:46] We're praising God's name revealed fully and finally and forever in Jesus Christ his son. That's why you find Jesus when he teaches his disciples he repeatedly tells them that they will pray to the father in his name.

In my name you will pray he says. And that's what's implicit here in this word Amen. Isn't that how Paul puts it in his letter to the Corinthians 2 Corinthians chapter 1 says this For all the promises of God find their yes in Jesus Christ and that's why it's through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

All the promises of God find their yes their affirmation in Jesus Christ and therefore through him by naming his name we utter our Amen to God for his glory we say yes Lord be glorified through your son.

So when we say Amen at the end of our prayers as the climax to our prayers what we're saying to God is this yes in Jesus at last we can be sure we can declare that forever it's true that everything that God has promised will be fulfilled for his people.

means we can come to God the Father through Jesus Christ his Son. So obviously it's a supremely Christian prayer isn't it?

[13:21] Only in Jesus can anybody say Amen. Only because he came and lived and died and rose again and ascended and only because he reigns as Lord of all only because he lives forever as our great high priest in heaven only because of that can we pray at all and can our prayer mean anything at all.

So everything that we pray everything that we ask of God the Father we pray in Jesus in him and through him we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

We affirm our praise to God's name made known forever in Jesus. That's what it means when we're saying Amen. So if you don't believe that about Jesus Christ don't say Amen at the end of anybody's prayer.

You're contradicting yourself. But if you do and you trust that in him God has made known his plan and purpose and its great fulfillment for his people forever in saying Amen you're offering your Amen to God for his glory through Jesus.

We affirm our praise to God's name made known in Jesus and in him alone when we say that little word Amen. But second let's think about the whole of the doxology for the kingdom the power and the glory are yours forever.

[14:59] And when we say those words we are affirming our praise of God's nature made known forever in Jesus Christ the true nature of his kingdom and his power and his glory.

We pray all these things for in Jesus first thine is the kingdom yours is the kingdom. And what we're saying is that it's in Jesus and in Jesus alone that God reveals the true nature of his sovereign authority in this world.

In taking these words on our lips we're affirming that Jesus is the great king now and forever. Now Jesus' last words before he ascended to heaven made that very plain didn't they?

All authority in heaven and on earth he said has been given to me and therefore the church has the authority of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and to make disciples to command allegiance to Jesus and to his authority.

And therefore of course we can have great expectations as the church and great ambitions in our prayers because we go with the authority of the king and we pray in the name of the authority of God's king.

[16:20] kingdom. But notice thine yours is the kingdom is what we say not ours it's heaven's kingdom and it's a heavenly kingdom not earth's and an earthly one.

And we have a heavenly authority as Christ's church not an earthly authority in that way and that's very very important. Remember what Jesus said to Pontius Pilate in John chapter 18 my kingdom he said is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world my servants my followers my disciples would have been fighting so that I wouldn't be delivered over to the Jews. They'd have been fighting to establish my kingdom by force but no that's not what they're doing.

And when they did try to do that Jesus rebuked them. Very important the authority that Christ has given his people on earth is not that kind of earthly authority not at all.

We are to have great expectations of the authority we carry into all the world but not that it should be exercised in this world's way.

[17 : 38] Our weapons said the apostle Paul are not of flesh and blood rather it's a weapon of God's word that he has given us which has divine power to the pulling down of strongholds to destroy strongholds he says and to take every thought captive to obey Christ.

It's the authority of Christ's word that we have not the authority of worldly weapons. So yes we are to pray your kingdom come your will be done in earth but we seek the advance of heaven's authority and heaven's kingdom heaven's way.

Because you see it's in Jesus that we see the true nature of God's authority at work in this world. It's in his word that his kingdom is advanced.

It's by his word in the gospel that people will be humbled to become the subjects of his kingdom not by the sword. That's why Jesus rebuked Peter when he picked up a sword and after his resurrection he gave Peter the charge feed my sheep not fight with my sword.

It's very very important isn't it that we remember that. There have been times in history for certain when the church has forgotten that. When the church has taken the sword in Christ's name. That has led only to unmitigated tragedy.

[19 : 09] to disaster. But there's other ways aren't there that we can forget that Christ's authority is a different kind of this world.

We can dress up in all kinds of pious Christian language our desire for kingdoms and empires. Things which aren't his kingdom and not his way but in fact they're just our kingdom and our empire building our way.

It can happen can't it. We can even pursue ministry and mission in the name of Christ in that way.

Because as human beings our ambitions are very very easily corrupted aren't they?

That's to be like the hypocrites Jesus spoke of in verse 2 who did everything that they might be praised by other people or who did everything that they might be seen by other people. But no you see when we pray yours is the kingdom that means to learn from Jesus what God's authority is really like in this world.

To say yes amen. Everything I pray may be shaped Lord by your authority at work not by this world's authorities.

[20 : 30] Your kingdom your way not mine. We need to remember that don't we when we pray for our own ventures our own ministries all the things we have ambitions for for Christ.

Your kingdom Lord your way. Yours is the kingdom. And we pray amen let it be for says Jesus yours is the power.

power. And when we say that we are saying that it's in Jesus that God reveals also the true nature of his sovereign control over this world and over our lives.

It's Hebrews chapter 1 that tells us that Jesus upholds the whole universe by the word of his power. The whole universe. He alone is in control of this whole world.

And therefore yes we can have complete confidence when we come to God in prayer. We can pray as verse 11 teaches us give us this day our daily bread. Or verse 13 lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

[21 : 42] We can pray that with marvelous assurance because yes the whole world including you and your life is in his hands. He knows grace.

And he cares says Jesus for every little bird of the air. He cares enough even to clothe the lily of the fields with beauty. He's in control of everything.

Every hair on our head is numbered. Yours is the power oh Lord. And so we pray yes with great great confidence.

But also because of that we pray likewise with great contentment. For God's power, his sovereign control over all things is supremely revealed to us also in Jesus.

And it's a power not as the world imagines power to be but a power as the Bible tells us made perfect in weakness. Think of what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

[22 : 51] Christ crucified, he said, in weakness. A stumbling block to Jews. Folly to the Gentiles, the Greeks. And yet, said Paul, in Christ crucified both the power of God and the wisdom of God to change the world for Christ.

Yes, the gospel of Christ looks very foolish, very feeble, very weak. And yet what Jesus says is that it is in that that we see the true revelation of God's almighty power.

When we pray, we like to imagine sometimes, don't we, God answering our prayers with a work of mighty power, with works of great thundering, taking all the matters that concern us into complete control and changing them just like that.

that. But you see, to pray for yours is the kingdom, for yours is the power, is to have learned that God's words to Paul in answer to his prayers are very, very often the way that God shows his power and authority at work in our lives.

Paul prayed, take away this terrible thorn, and God said, no. my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

[24 : 27] To pray like that is to pray for God's power in our lives and be content for God to show his power, his way. Which might look very, very weak indeed to the world, and might feel very, very weak indeed to us.

In answer to that prayer at that time. To pray like that is to say, yes, Amen, Lord. You are in control. Yours is the power. So everything I'm praying, let it be truly submitted to your control.

Not my idea of power at work in my life, not the world's idea of power at work in my life, but yours, your power, your way.

It's the prayer asking to be reminded that it was in Jesus that God's power was supremely displayed in this world. That was displayed in the cross where he died.

[25 : 35] thirdly, we pray, Amen, let it be for, says Jesus, yours is the glory. And again, in saying that, we're saying that it's in Jesus and Jesus alone that God reveals to us the true nature of his sovereign presence in this world.

God's glory is his appearance. It's the visible expression of the invisible God. God. The glory of God is the presence of God. When the Lord spoke to Moses and promised that his presence would go with him, he appeared before Moses and showed him his glory.

When Isaiah, in Isaiah chapter 6, saw God, we're told that he saw his glory. As John says in chapter 12, that meant that he saw Jesus' glory, the glory that he had with the Father before the beginning of the world.

And you see, it's in Jesus and nowhere else that God's glory is most fully manifest in our world. Prophet Zechariah relayed God's words to his people. I will be the glory in the midst of my people, he said. And in Jesus, God's presence in all his glory is revealed.

[26 : 59] It's what John says in the beginning of his gospel. No one has ever seen God, but the only begotten one, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Jesus is the explanation, the exposition, the unveiling, the full explanation of the glory of God. The word, says John, became flesh.

And we have seen his glory. glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father. James, the apostle, writes in his letter of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory.

He is the glory of God's presence in this world. And he is the unveiling of that forever. He is Emmanuel, he is God with us.

Behold, I am with you always, says Jesus. What kind of glory does this ultimate revelation of the presence of the only God reveal to us in this world?

[28 : 11] Well, it's not, is it, the world's idea of glory. It's not like Caesar and his victorious armies marching in triumphant strength and pomp and pride right through the hordes of the captive people.

We have seen his glory, says John, full of grace and truth. That is, abounding in steadfast covenant love and faithfulness.

We have seen it just as Moses saw it on the mountain, but now we have seen it, says John, fully revealed in all its terrible beauty, in all its shocking, costly horror.

We have seen it, says John, at the cross of Calvary. That's what John means when he says that. That's where John saw God's glory revealed.

Jesus said, now is the hour. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you. Jesus prayed that to his Father as he went to the cross. And God did glorify him.

[29 : 22] There, the deepest midst of the darkness. That's what we were reading this morning in Romans chapter 3. In Jesus and in his cross, God revealed ultimately and forever the true nature of his sovereign presence in this world.

God, when the Son, being in the very form of God, didn't grasp hold of that which was his by rights, full equality with God, that he humbled himself, even to the death on a cross.

Because that's who he is. And that's what the presence of the glory of God means in this our world. And that's the mystery of the gospel of our God.

Donald MacLeod puts it this way, the place of shame and darkness and pain, where the Most High is most completely veiled, becomes the place where he is most completely unveiled.

Where he most unequivocally serves, he is most unequivocally Lord. We've seen his glory, a glory not of an aggressive power, but a glory of an amazing passion.

[30 : 56] Not of self aggrandizement, but of self giving to us. And therefore, you see, he is present with us still in this world, in his greatest glory, often where he is most veiled still to a world that despises this kind of inglorious glory.

And we also, friends, as his people, are often most glorified in him when our glory may also be equally veiled to this world, even veiled to us.

often it's in the crucible of the greatest suffering, in the place of greatest and costly self-giving, that God is glorified most in the lives of his people.

Because that is where God was glorified ultimately in the life and in the death of his son. That's what Peter, the apostle, says to us in his letter, if you're insulted for the name of Christ, you're blessed, because the spirit of the glory of God rests on you.

The spirit of the glory of God is our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that means that we pray as Jesus teaches us to pray here.

[32 : 24] We pray, we also have forgiven our debtors, those who have sinned against us, perhaps deeply, terribly, hurtfully, repeatedly.

We also have forgiven our debtors, Lord, for yours is the glory, a glory made manifest not in self-defense, in self-justification, and self-assertion, and revenge, and recrimination, but a glory made known in self-giving, and in self-sacrifice, and in redemption, and reconciliation.

We say, Amen. Yes, Lord. May all that I pray in my prayers, may all of it show the world your glory. May this world see, even in me, something of the Lord Jesus, of your sovereign presence in this world, full of grace and truth.

Everything, you see, that we pray, everything that we can pray, everything that we must pray, is for yours is the kingdom, and yours is the power, and yours is the glory forever.

[34 : 08] We affirm God's true nature made known in Jesus Christ. And we ask him that everything that we pray might be shaped by his kingdom's authority, and submitted to his kingdom's power, that it might show his kingdom's true glory.

And we affirm God's name made fully known in Jesus. It's through him, and it's through him alone that we utter our Amen to God, for his glory.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen. Let's pray. Great King of kings, we bow before you. Great God of earth and heaven, your kingdom, power, and gracious glory, may this world in Jesus see, even in us.

[35 : 50] May we say, Amen. So let it be. Amen.