

The Power and the Glory
Lord's Prayer — part 6
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(Luke 2:1-14 NRSV) In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. {2} This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. {3} All went to their own towns to be registered. {4} Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. {5} He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. {6} While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. {7} And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. {8} In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. {9} Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. {10} But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: {11} to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. {12} This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." {13} And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, {14} "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.

Very familiar words to us all. Certainly familiar as we have walked through this prayer of Jesus for the past five weeks.

But if there is one thing that is most intriguing about this final phrase in our Lord's prayer it is . . . ?

It is not found in either of the Biblical texts that present us this prayer.

(Matthew 6:9-15 NRSV) "Pray then in this way: 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 debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. {13} And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. {14} For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; {15} but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

(Luke 11:2-4 NRSV) He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. {3} Give us each day our daily bread. {4} And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."

I am not sure that we need to go into why this was added to the prayer — but the one thing I do want to say — all indications are that this was a very early addition by the church.

So, very soon after the Gospels were written, the church understood this last part of the prayer to be a fitting conclusion. And that of course, is how the Roman Catholic church continues to use it — as a conclusion, an afterthought to the prayer.

But that is not what I want to focus on today.

I want to focus on the whole issue of power.

When we say: For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever; what comes to mind?

What word pictures form in your mind?

For me, when I hear those words — the first word that pops into my mind is MAJESTY.

And the majesty that I see is:

- birth of a child
- sunrise/sunset
- on coming storm
- mountains
- ocean

I know that you would add many other word pictures that come to mind with MAJESTY.

While that is what I **see**, when I recite this prayer — for many of you — what you see may not be majesty at all.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have asked this question to many different people. And if I had to say what the number one answer was it would be not majesty (although many of you articulated that) it would be POWER.

And as I pressed to find out what that means, many of you used words like —

- control
- omnipotence
-

I think over the years you have heard me talk about this issue of God's "control" of the world and all in it.

I don't believe that this prayer has anything to do with God being a micro-manager of the world and creation.

I don't believe that little Alex Rodriguez was put into the world by God and inflicted with illness by God and died at 5 years old because it was God's plan

I don't believe that the millions of people who have contracted HIV/AIDS are being punished by God

I don't believe those things

And neither do most of you

BUT — we have a hard time letting go of the idea that God is in absolute, total control

Because if God is not in control — then who is?

I, like Jeff, do not believe in a personification of SATAN — so for me, I don't have to worry about a bad god being in control either.

God has given us the ability to choose — FREE WILL — and if we really have **free** will — then God is no longer in TOTAL control.

So what the heck does this phrase — added by the early church — mean?

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken

throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

Now you are probably asking yourself — what in the world does that scripture have to do with the Lord's Prayer?

In that very first paragraph, Luke is setting up for us, and understanding of what the phrase: For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever — means.

In one little story, Luke moves from the Emperor of the world (Caesar Augustus) to a new King who will change the world.

Who do the angels sing for?

When Jesus was born, Augustus had already been emperor for a quarter of a century.

He ruled the known world

He created the "Pax Romana" the Roman peace

a period of peace unheard of before (or really since)

He brought Roman prosperity to the world

He controlled — he had power over the world

Luke sets up the birth of Jesus in juxtaposition to Augustus.

And he reminds all his hearers of a familiar prophecy.

(Micah 5:2 NRSV) But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Unfortunately, we forget how that passage continues — but to the Jews of Jesus day, they knew. LISTEN:

(Micah 5:4-5 NRSV) And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; {5} and he shall be the one of peace.

Augustus thought that he was in control — he thought that: the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory were his forever.

But Luke says: NO.

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever belong not to Augustus but to Jesus.

Do you see what Luke is doing?

This pastoral scene (as we often see it), with shepherds paying homage to a baby king, suddenly becomes a statement of two kingdoms.

Two kingdoms that are on a collision course.
Two kingdoms that have a very different definition of what peace and power and glory are all about.

Every time we pray this prayer we are challenging the way the world is — with a message of what the world can be.

We pray for:
a intimate relationship with a God who can be known

We pray for:
God's way and not our own

We pray for:
enough — not for greed

We pray for:
forgiveness

We pray:
that we will forgive

We pray:
that we will choose the right path

We pray:
that God's peace and power would reign
and not a peace created at the butt of a gun or nuclear bomb

Are you sure you want to pray this prayer?

If you have the courage — join me in praying:

Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.