

The One in Whom We Glory
John 12:12-19

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We come today to the final words of the Lord's Prayer. *For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

If you are a good Catholic, you know that phrase is not in the original Lord's Prayer. Of course, the Catholics are right. It was really a second century addition. If you are a good Methodist, you cannot receive your daily bread, be forgiven of your sins, and delivered from the evil one without exclaiming, *For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.* Of course, the Methodists are right. So it seems appropriate on Palm Sunday to season our prayers with an act of praise. Will you sing it with me?

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM. OUR GOD REIGNS.

*Our God is an awesome God,
He reigns from heaven above.*

Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but our God reigns.

*This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.*

It is human nature to build our own kingdoms and ignore the kingdom of God. The kingdom of Saddam Hussein tumbled this week. The kingdom of George Bush will pass away. David was a man after God's own heart so, naturally, he thought the world belonged to him. But God had a better idea. Nebuchadnezzar was a man of power around Persia, but the sense of his own importance drove him insane. Pilate had the power to put Jesus on a cross. God had the power to raise Him from the dead. Nero had the power to put Paul in prison. Today we name our dogs Nero and our children Paul.

To whom does world dominion belong: democracy or dictatorship, capitalism or socialism? To what extent shall we impose our way of life on the world? While we ponder such questions, we will be wise to remember the King of kings and Lord of lords to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given and before whom we shall ultimately bend our knees and give an account. This is our Father's world.

The reign of God seems small and weak. Who is this itinerant preacher riding into Jerusalem on a dumb donkey? Had He no friend who owned a white

stallion? Who are these people that line the streets? Tax collectors, prostitutes, smelly fishermen, thieves, a few drunkards and some happy housewives—not a prominent person in the crowd as they scatter palm branches in the street.

But, things are not always what they seem to be. An airline pilot, who made regular flights overseas, owned a small filling station in a little town where he loved to work when he was home. One day the pilot went down to the hardware store to buy a wrench. The store owner asked the pilot, “What’s new?” “Oh,” replied the pilot, “I’m thinking about taking the Cairo run this month as the London trip is getting boring.” As he paid for his wrench and left, a bystander said, “Who does that guy think he is?” The store owner replied, “Oh, just some nut who runs the gas station and thinks he is an airline pilot.” Things are not always what they appear to be.

There is not much shock and awe in a mustard seed or yeast in dough. Not many people find treasures in fields or precious pearls in oysters. Even though the kingdom of God is like these things, be quite assured, our God reigns.

OUR GOD RULES. For thine is the power.

Power, all power, surely is thine. But don’t be fooled. Not power to force, but power to forgive. Not power to hurt, but power to help. Not power to destroy, but power to deliver.

Todd Beamer was on board United flight 93, September 11, 2001. He was on his way to a sales meeting in northern California when hijackers seized the plane. Taking the GTE phone from the seat, Todd managed to reach a supervisor on the ground. She relayed the rest of the story, convincing Todd they were on their way to a Washington, D.C. target. Todd asked her to join him in praying the Lord’s Prayer, to which he added, “Help me God. Help me Jesus.” In a few minutes flight 93 crashed in a rural field 80 miles southeast of Pittsburg.

The power God gives is not blind energy or brute force. The power God gives is the ability to achieve a purpose. It is the power of love that suffers to redeem.

Tony Compolo tells this story: In Ducktown USA, every Sunday all the ducks waddle out of their houses and down main street to church. The duck choir waddles in and takes its place. The duck pastor waddles forward to preach. “Ducks, God has given you wings. With wings you can fly. With wings you can soar like eagles. No walls can confine you. No fences can hold you. God has made you to fly like a bird.” All the ducks quack, “Amen.” And then they waddle home. Once you encounter the power of God, how can things be the same?

A.W. Tozier said, “Anything God has ever done, He can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere, He can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do for you.” Why not join the great parade of those who believe and crown him Lord of all?

What the Church needs most is not a marketing strategy but a prayer strategy. Karl Barth said, “To clasp our hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.” Instead of the Church at play, we need a Church at prayer. Instead of God at my disposal, I need to be on my knees. In this anxious world of concerns, we need to lift our eyes toward heaven so our sanity can be restored and God’s kingdom may come on earth.—For it’s *not by swords loud clashing nor roll of stirring drums, but in deeds of love and mercy that the heavenly kingdom comes.*

OUR GOD SHINES the glory.

Glory—Doxa doxology, joy, splendor, honor, beauty, brilliance, majesty. Glory comes from a job well done. *I brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do* (John 17:4). Glory is the luminosity that enlightens the world. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Bach signed all of his compositions *Soli Deo Gloria*—To God alone be glory.

When we behold the glory of God, can we do anything but shout! My grandmother was a shouting Methodist. Sometimes in church she would get happy. At first she would be quiet, but as the joy of the Lord swelled within, she would begin to let it out. She always carried a white handkerchief. She would wave it over her head. Then she would say, “Glory, glory, glory, glory to God in the highest.”

My grandmother had something modern Methodists could use. She had the glory of the Lord down in her heart. Nothing about it was contrived. Nothing about it was for show. Joy is a lot like laughter. If you have to think about it too much, it’s not genuine. The Psalmist said:

*Praise the Lord
Praise God in his sanctuary
Praise God in his mighty heavens
Praise God for his surpassing greatness
Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord.*

OUR GOD ENDURES forever.

Forever— what’s forever? Does time always expire? Is there a warranty that never runs out? Two of the longest words in the English language are ‘Never’ and ‘Forever’. A little boy, who had just learned to tie his shoes began crying loudly. When asked why he was sobbing he replied, “Now I will have to tie my own shoes forever.”

In this temporal, transient world we constantly confront the “ifs” of life. Booming stock markets are not forever. Love relationships are not forever. Job security is not forever. Children are not forever. Friends are not forever. *There’s*

change and decay in everything I see. O Thou who changest not, abide in me.

God is forever. From everlasting to everlasting, God is God. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, Who was, Who is, Who is to come. The Bible strains the language to say God is forever.

Robert Baker said, "As I grow older, I care less what people think about me and more about what God thinks of me. I expect to be with Him much longer than I will be with you." To paraphrase Irving Berlin's famous love song:

God is loving you...always.

With a love that's true...always.

When the things you've planned, need a helping hand

God will understand...always.

Days may not be fair...always.

That's when God is there...always.

Not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a
year but...always.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. What can the Church say but "Amen!"

Amen means: So be it. Let it be. Yes! All right! Hot dog, this is it! Let the Church say, "Amen!"

