

The Kingdom, Power and Glory
Revelation 4:1-11
Matthew 6:9-13

Today's sermon is the last in a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer and my last sermon in this church. I thank you all who have listened to my sermons patiently and paid such good attention to my messages. I have enjoyed my pastorate here and I appreciate having had the opportunity to serve you. Thank you for the support, guidance, patience, and encouragement that you have shared with Sun and me. And thank you for the love and the warm hearts you have showed us during our time at Faith UMC.

I have preached about one hundred Sundays during the past two years, but you may not remember and you don't have to remember a single of my sermons! However, I would let you remember this: that life is uncertain, so affirm the real purpose of life and do not postpone the work you are called to do. Last Thursday, in the early morning, our beloved brother, Virgil Brenneman passed away. We expected him to be recovered and back home from the Health Care Center this last weekend, but he passed away unexpectedly. We will have another service to celebrate his life and death and resurrection tomorrow afternoon.

Let's take a look back to today's scripture lesson, Matthew 6:13. I found a problem in Matthew 6:13 in the parenthesized phrase, the final sentence of the Lord's Prayer - "For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever, Amen." We may ask, "What's wrong with it?"

The form of the Lord's Prayer that we have known in the church and prayed traditionally is from the manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew was first written about 90 AD, not by Matthew himself, but by the church he founded after the resurrection of Christ. In the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel Matthew, the last sentence of the Lord's Prayer was founded. Before this time, this last sentence did not exist. That is, the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's original version never included the words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever, Amen." I don't want this information to discourage you. Rather, I would like to let you know how the Bible has been handed down to us.

The way our Bible has been handed down to us has something to do with the history of the printing press. The first technique used for printing was through the use of woodblocks, developed in China in 220 AD, and also dating back to 4th and 5th century Rome and Egypt. Block printing first came to Christian Europe as a method for printing on cloth, where it was common by 1300.

Around 1230 AD, Korea first invented a metal type movable printing press, the first metal type printed books were published in 1377 in Korea. Around 1450, Johannes Gutenberg introduced what is regarded as the invention of movable type in Europe. What I'm trying to say is that the Bible we have now did not exist until 1446.

Then, did the Bible not exist until 1446? Of course, there were Bibles before 1446, but they were in a different form, hand-written manuscripts stored in the form of large scrolls. These were written either on parchment (sheepskin) or on papyrus (pressed reeds), and needed to be copied by hand continually because the materials used degraded quickly. In humid climates, papyrus could start disintegrating in only a few years! Therefore, for thousands of years, Christian monks in some monasteries spent their whole lives as scribes, copying the scriptures by hand, over and over and over again so that these manuscripts would be preserved for posterity.

Some ancient manuscripts of Matthew that date from the 4th or 5th century contain a new addition to the text: “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.” When the King James Version of the Bible was printed, these 4th or 5th century manuscripts were the earliest known manuscripts. However, later, even older manuscripts were discovered, which show that this last verse in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew was not originally part of the Gospel of Matthew. When Bible scholars discovered this, they began publishing newer publications of the Bible with this last verse of the Lord’s Prayer in parentheses, indicating that this verse is a later addition. There are many such instances in the text of the Bible. Piecing together the original text of the Bible is a work in progress still, as many new fragments of papyri of the scriptural texts continue to be discovered in modern archaeological finds.

Today, there exist 5,650 handwritten copies of the Greek version of the New Testament, and over 10,000 copies in Latin. In the process of hand-copying these many, many manuscripts of the Bible for thousands of years, some verses naturally became added or altered in the copying process, until the printing press became widely used. The last sentence of the Lord’s Prayer, which reflects one of these later additions, had become important for the believers, so scholars call this last sentence “the doxology” in the Lord’s Prayer. Today, I want to emphasize this last sentence of the Lord’s Prayer, “For thine is the kingdom and power and glory, for ever. Amen.” There is real purpose of life, doxology, in this sentence.

Let me focus on the three things in this last sentence of the Lord’s Prayer.

First of all, it reminds us that success or failure is not the point of life.

The verse forces us to look at whether the focus of our pursuits is eternal or temporal. Many people worry about failure. We all make mistakes, and sometimes they are pretty bad. But a failure can become a stepping-stone to success. The issue is not whether we are going to succeed or not, but what our purpose in life is truly.

The teaching of Jesus and the concerns of this world, the fashion of this world, are quite different. This world tempts us, “Be successful, that is your goal in life.” However, this is not a true purpose for human life. The Lord, Jesus taught us “To seek the Kingdom of God” as the first and most important purpose of life. “Be successful yourself” is the temptation. One who achieved this goal of success in human history, in the world’s view, was King Solomon. He was a King, rich and wealthy and all-powerful man. But in the

end, he concludes in the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, “Everything is meaningless.” To be rich or not, to be successful or not, to have power or not, it is no big deal without God. All things in the world are temporal and pass away like a mist in a morning. Don’t try so hard to be successful, rather strive to live a meaningful life. The meaningful life is the life that believes in God, pursues the Kingdom of God eternal!

The rich young man who came to see the Lord was a man who had all three things: wealth, honor and power. But, he felt an emptiness that could not be filled with these three things in his heart. He really needed something else, not these false things, but the real thing: eternal life and the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the ultimate purpose of our life, which cannot be postponed on our life agenda.

The second reflection is that “the power and glory” is not ours, but belongs to God.

Most of people want to have and pursue these three things, material wealth, power and honor. Mostly call person who has these things successful. Satan tempts Jesus, our Lord, with slightly different elements from these three: he tempts Jesus to make bread from a stone, to be a sensation to the people by jumping down from the top of the temple, and to amass all power by bowing down to Satan. These three elements are not the real image of the meaningful life. These are false images of life. We have learned that the purpose of life is to glorify God. Many people have thought of fame or power as a Christian as a way to glorify God. But, it is not so. This is the way of pursuing self-glory. The Lord taught us to say, “God, the power and glory are Yours.” This is the clarification of power and glory that we are looking for.

Some might start out by saying, “Give me wealth first of all, and then with this wealth I will serve the church and use these for God.” This seems like a wonderful and fascinating dream, but it is not so. This is a false dream, and we should not be deceived. This is seeking self-glory, not God’s glory. The power and Glory is not ours, but these belong to God.

God’s power is not the power I could pursue, but the power given to us when we have need, when we are weak. The honor of God is the grace given to us when we become a servant of God through our work for the sake of God and humbly submit to God.

Lastly, then how can we glorify God?

There are two ways of glorifying God: one by taking the Great Commandment to be a witness of the Lord, and taking the Great Commission of the Lord.

In John 17, we discover the scene of the Lord praying right before he was betrayed. He prayed like this, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” (John 17:4) The Lord told us, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another... as I have loved you. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” In this commandment, the real Jesus stands up and tells us what he wants us to do.

Without this mission and commission in our life, there is no glory of God to give to the Lord.

You were made for a mission. God is at work in the world, and he wants you to join him. This assignment is called your mission. God wants you to have both a ministry in the Body of Christ and a mission in the world. Your ministry is your service to believers, and your mission is your service to unbelievers. Fulfilling your mission in the world is God's purpose for our lives.

Your mission is the continuing of Jesus' mission on earth. As his followers, we are to continue what Jesus started. Jesus called us not only to come to him, but to go for him. In the Great Commission, Jesus said, "Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you." This is not a great suggestion, but the great commission. It is mandated for us to do! Through our commission to be continued, God will be glorified by us.

Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses," not "You will be my attorney." To be a God's witness is more important than all others. The Lord called us to do this commandment and take up the torch of his ministry.

Every wedding I've ever been to has included an interesting question: "Do you take this person to have and to hold from this day forward?" The answer always comes back the same: "I do." Jesus' prayer ends with little word, "Amen." It's not just the signal that the prayer is over. It means, "So be it," and it's a lot like saying, "I do" at a wedding. Agreeing to the marriage vows is not the end of our commitment, but the beginning. Saying "Amen" at the end of prayer is a commitment to do what we've prayed. We aren't just putting a period at the end of a list of requests, we are making a promise to live out what we've said to God. Be careful with that little word! When you say it, you've just said "I do" to God. Amen! May it be so for you and for me.