

Cedar Heights Community Presbyterian Church

Rev. Johnny Janssen

Consecration Sunday—“*For Thine Is the Kingdom, & the Power, & the Glory, Forever*”

11/17/2024

Old Testament Lesson—Psalm 97

The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him, and consumes his adversaries on every side. His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory. All worshipers of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols; all gods bow down before him. Zion hears and is glad, and the towns of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments, O God. For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods. The Lord loves those who hate evil; he guards the lives of his faithful; he rescues them from the hand of the wicked. Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

New Testament Lesson—Luke 11:1-4

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."

As we wrap up this series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer this morning, it felt appropriate to end our focus on stewardship the same way we began: with the Lord's Prayer as it's given to us in Scripture.

We began in October with Matthew's version of the prayer; and today we'll close with Luke's version. There's something special about bookending this time of gratitude—this time of taking stock of our gifts with the prayer our Lord taught us.

We see God at work within every part of the prayer (as I hope you've experienced throughout this sermon series). And, of course, God's also at work whenever we adopt this prayer as our own and seek to live it out in our everyday lives.

Friends, there is *power* in this prayer. After all, its words go back to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Its intention goes back to our Lord—to the Author of salvation itself.

There's power in this prayer not only because it comes from the heart of Christ, but also because it connects us with the saints past, present, and future. These words have been prayed by the faithful for thousands of years.

Just imagine the cumulative effect upon God's heart—the effect of billions of souls across time lifting up with sincerity, “Thy will be done,” “forgive us our debts,” “deliver us from evil,” “for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.”

Imagine those words, over the course of millennia, being propelled toward the throne of grace—those prayers compounding together in a cycle of holiness that touches both the seen and unseen worlds—spewing out the promise of eternal life throughout all Creation!

Now, maybe all that sounds a bit hyperbolic to you; but that's what I envision when the prayer of Christ—the prayer of God in the flesh, is carried back to God Almighty.

These are the words of God returning to God, except now those words are infused with the adoration and worship of humanity and the entire created order! The resulting power released from this is impossible to fathom.

It must be something akin to splitting an atom—except, what follows isn't harmful or destructive. In fact, it's the antithesis of rupture and damage. What follows, instead (I believe), is a kind of supernova of love that's too powerful to stifle and can never be quenched.

Friends: If God really *is* Love (as the Bible teaches), then when the prayers of Love return to their Source, we can expect a surplus of goodness and mercy that will reverberate across heaven and earth—filling our cup of blessing a hundred times over.

Yes, indeed, there is great power in the prayer of our Lord. I don't think we realize we're returning God's own words back to God when we say it each Sunday. But I want us to take stock of that today. I want us to notice it this morning, and to feel God's creative force that flows from those timeless words.

Today is, of course, Consecration Sunday. Each year, we get an opportunity to step out in faith and dedicate the best of what we have to God. Each year, we get the chance to respond to God's abundance and bounty with our gratitude.

We present our offerings to the Lord every Sunday (it's true). But today's different; isn't it? Because today is as much about promises as it is about giving—as much about trusting God to provide down the road as it is about our gratitude now.

Yes, today's about acknowledging the ways God's *been* at work in the world and the ways we believe God *will* act and intervene going forward.

Remember: God isn't some distant spirit forever residing in the heavens content to dwell far removed from humankind. No, our Creator is closer to us than our own heartbeat. God, in fact, *became* one of us—became a human being in the person of Jesus of Nazareth—eager to live among us and experience the human condition.

Siblings in Christ, the truth is that we and all of Creation have been sustained by God's generosity since we came into being. We're gathered together in this “place for everyone,” surrounded by those we love and who love us because the Lord is and has always been generous with us—generous beyond measure...

...generously patient in our sin...abundant in grace—gifting us with community and resources beyond what we need—blessing us with a Good Shepherd whose guidance and presence will outlast even the longest and darkest valley—beyond even death itself.

The long and short of it is this: As Jesus gave his life for each of us—for the sins of the world, we too are called give our lives to God and for God's Kingdom. As the Apostle Paul says, we are called to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

Through Christ's death and resurrection, our entire lives and bodies have become consecrated—have been made sacred, precious, beloved, invaluable. Every breath we breathe is a testament to God's love and generosity!

And so it's about knowing *who* we are and *whose* we are—understanding that in life and in death, we belong to God. We belong to God forever. And that special prayer we've been gifted with, I believe, helps the Church remain accountable.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, whose generosity extended even beyond giving his own life, passed along that same spirit of generosity to us—not only by his example, but through the Lord's Prayer, too.

In offering those words with sincerity, we elevate the needs of others above our own. We affirm that our God and Creator knows what's best for us, that we depend on the grace of the Almighty, and that we trust in the Lord's mercies and steadfast love. And finally, when offering those words, we pledge to following in the footsteps of Christ, come what may.

Praying the Lord's Prayer is the most generous prayer we can pray. This is so because it not only affirms, but *celebrates* the truth that it's not about us! It was never about us. It's about God. Or, to be precise, it's about God-*with*-us. (But more on God-With-Us next month)

Yes, the Lord's Prayer is the most generous of all prayers—generous because it directs our focus away from ourselves and to the One from whom all blessings flow: *Thy* will be done. For *Thine* is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Not my will, not my kingdom, not my power and certainly not my glory...

This prayer is generous, you see, because it helps to keep us humble. During Jesus' ministry on earth, he never sought his own glory. In everything he said and did, he directed our attention to the One who sent him.

Christ's words and deeds weren't a project in self-glorification, but a master class in praising the only One truly worthy of praise. Christ's was a lifetime of doxology—a life we're called to imitate. For *Thine* is the glory.

Even Jesus' most spectacular miracles—curing the sick, raising the dead, calming the storm—these were demonstrations of *God's* power, not his own. Those wonders showcased *God's* transformative love—*God's* grace—*God's* deliverance.

In the same way, friends, it's our Creator God who empowers us for ministry, who calls and equips us to work and participate in peacemaking and reformation. It's God who performs miracles through us today. God works wonders through us, the hands and feet of Christ in the world. For *Thine* is the power.

But at the end of the day, I think the extend of God's generosity is best shown in the way we're invited to build God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. And this isn't something to be taken lightly. Friends, we get to be *co-creators* with God!

Let me say that again. We get to *create* the coming Kingdom! We get to build the beloved community *alongside* the One who made us and sustains us. We get to work *with* our Creator and Lord to make the earth a more just and equitable place for all. What a privilege that is! What a privilege to build a better world, together.

What a blessing to play such a vital role in bringing about God's Kingdom come. Have you noticed the state of the world today? Friends, there is no time to waste. We've got to get to work like yesterday. The world is crying out for it.

What's more: We know we've got what it takes to succeed—to help bring about the coming Kingdom of God—to co-create with our Creator—to partner with the One who calls us to partner with each other. The Kingdom is near—within our grasp!

So know and believe that the work we'll do together will be blessed. It will be holy, consecrated work. And, y'all, I know it's a lot. There is so much to be done. But remember: we're not obligated to complete the work, but neither are we free to abandon it.

We can do this. We can fill God's heart with so much love that our Creator's own cup might runneth over. For *Thine* is the Kingdom. In fact, so is everything else.

For *Thine* is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, Forever!

Amen.