

AUGUST 14, 2016

HOMILY AT ST. MATTHEW ORTHODOX CHURCH

“THE LORD’S PRAYER---PART 7, ‘FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM ...’”

Today is the last sermon in the series I have been preaching this summer on the Lord’s Prayer. Today is sermon #7 on the seventh part of the prayer taught us by our Lord Jesus Christ. The ending (in the Orthodox version) goes like this---“For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

Most likely, this ending of the Lord’s Prayer wasn’t in the original Lord’s Prayer as spoken by our Lord. The more reliable Bible manuscripts don’t have it. So in most translations, you will find it in a footnote.

It is thought the ending was added to the original prayer by the early Church very, very early. It was done to give a nice formal ending and conclusion to the best prayer of all.

Because this ending was probably not in the original prayer, there is some variety in the exact wording of the ending. You’ve probably noticed this when you’ve heard the Lord’s Prayer in different settings. Guess which Christian tradition has the longest version of the ending? You all guessed right! The Orthodox! We, unlike some other Christians, have the reference in the ending to the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

So the ending to the prayer was probably not in the original as prayed first by the Lord, but was added shortly thereafter by the early Christians. And a very good addition it was! What better way to end the greatest prayer ever than with these beautiful words of worship and praise of God?

With these words---“For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”---we are acknowledging that the triune God has always had, and always will have, the kingship of all, power over all, and infinite glory. We acknowledge in these words that God is worthy of our worship, praise, and thanksgiving.

So this ending is a fitting way to conclude the Lord’s Prayer—with the worship of God. For the worship of God should always be the top priority for Christians.

And not just when here at church---but we should be worshipping Him every day and everywhere.

A family went home on Sunday after liturgy and gathered around the dining room table for lunch. They asked little 4-year old Stevie to say grace. He prayed these words---“Thank you, God, for our food. Thank you that we got to go to church. Goodbye, God---see you next Sunday!” (in “Our Daily Bread”, 6/14/92)

Hopefully, we’re not like that. Hopefully, when we walk out of church on Sunday morning we don’t turn around and wave and say, “Good bye, God---see you next week!” Hopefully, we worship God each day and in every place. And that means it’s good to pray the Lord’s Prayer every day because it concludes with worship of God.

And it’s good to worship every day in our words, too, and in our thoughts and silent prayers. Every morning, we should thank God that He gave us one more day. During each

day, we should worship God and thank Him for His blessings and for getting us through the tasks of the day. And every night, we should worship Him again and praise Him for another day just passed.

And even on the rough days, the tough days, we should still worship Him in our words, thoughts, and actions. For He is with us on the “bad days” just as much as on the “good days”. Nothing can separate us from his love. As St. Paul wrote in Romans 8:28—“For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Back in the 1920's, the new Bolshevik government of Russia, carried out an extreme persecution of our Orthodox Church. Millions were martyred. There was one prison camp near Moscow, called Butova, which was the spot where arrested clergy were often sent-- bishops, priests, deacons, monks, and nuns. And not that many survived Butova. Some think perhaps as many as 50,000 Orthodox clergy were killed by the Communists in that one place. There was a bishop named Bartholomew imprisoned there. Bishop Bartholomew, who did not get out alive, managed to smuggle some letters out to some nuns who hadn't yet been arrested and had been under his spiritual direction. In one of those letters, the soon to be shot bishop wrote these words, “Despite the fact that I am deprived of everything I feel that Christ is near. That is the one thing that I am not deprived of.” (Keeping The Faith, Jennifer Wynot, Texas A & M University Press, 2001, p. 158)

On the bad days, God is still with us. Nothing can deprive us of His presence with us. Even on the worst of days, the kingdom and the power and the glory are still God's. And so we worship Him on every day.

If it's a Sunday or a holy day, then we worship Him here together. On days we don't have church services (and, of course, even on days we do!), we still worship Him in our own personal prayers and thoughts. Every day we worship Him. For every day the kingdom, power, and glory are His. And so we give credit where it is due—to God.

The great Austrian composer, Franz Joseph Haydn, died in 1809. He was in very poor health for a while before his death and seldom could go anywhere. As death drew near, his oratorio, “The Creation”, was performed at the Vienna Music Hall. It was possible for Haydn to attend (not conduct, though) because he was brought to the hall in a wheel chair. He sat up right in front near the orchestra in full view of the crowd. The crowd was thrilled as they heard for the first time his beautiful music about God creating the universe. And when the oratorio ended they gave perhaps one of the longest standing ovations ever. They all faced toward Haydn and applauded and applauded and cheered and cheered..... It went on and on and on and seemed like it would never end. Finally, Haydn, with the help of a couple of men, managed to stand up by his wheelchair. He motioned for the applause to stop and when the hall quieted down, he pointed up to heaven and loudly said, “Not from me....not from me. From *God* comes all that is good!” (in “Our Daily Bread”, 9/20/92)

The kingdom, power, and glory are certainly not ours! They belong to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let us always acknowledge that fact by worshipping God as were created to do. Let us give all praise to Him, for His is the kingdom and power and glory forever.

In closing, hear how St. Paul describes our God in I Timothy 6: 15-16----“the blessed

and only ruler, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.”

