

All For Jesus

Matthew 6:13

We come to the conclusion of the Lord's prayer this afternoon, and there is a question as soon as we come to the text. We read the words at the end of verse 13, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." I'm reading that from the NKJV, which attaches a footnote, telling us that some of the ancient Greek texts omit those words altogether. If you are reading from the ESV, you will not find those words written in the actual text, but then we are referred to a footnote telling us that some ancient Greek texts add those words! If you read from the NASB, you will see those words written in the text, but put in brackets with a footnote telling us that this last phrase, this conclusion to the Lord's prayer, is omitted in the earliest manuscripts.

So what do we make of all that? At the outset let me say that none of those translations doubt or question the inerrancy of God's word. None of those English translations have any intention of undermining the authority of God's word. And neither do I, to say clearly what I hope is very obvious as you have listened to me preach these many years now. This is not a question of error or mistake in God's work, nor a question of the inspiration or the infallibility of the Bible. But it is a question of which Greek texts of the New Testament are the most accurate.

The reality is that we don't have an existing, complete, and original Greek Bible from one source. We don't have one, single Greek manuscript that starts with Matthew 1 and ends with Revelation 22. Instead, we have thousands of sources, thousands upon thousands of texts. Texts that were carefully copied by hand and passed down from generation to generation. But the oldest texts that still exist are dated about 200 or 300 AD.

And again, there is no single text that includes the whole Bible. Just fragments. Thousands and thousands of fragments, that are together to form the whole of the Greek New Testament.

Among those thousands of texts, it fair to say that there two basic groups of texts. We could label one group as the oldest manuscripts, and the other group we could label as the majority of the manuscripts, which typically are dated later in history. With respect to that second group, as the church developed over the centuries, especially into the time of the reformation, the majority of the Greek manuscripts became rather uniform when gathered together into a translation of the complete New Testament. Those later manuscripts are now the majority of texts that are available, which makes sense, since the more time that passed in history, the later you go the more likelihood you will have manuscripts still available.

One of the obvious differences between those two groups is this, that those later manuscripts, the majority of texts available to us, tend to include small phrases or words that don't appear in the earliest manuscripts. So the question for us becomes, which group of texts are more reliable and faithful with reference to the actual books written by the apostles during the first century? Are the oldest manuscripts, though fewer in number, more reliable? More accurate? Or are the later manuscripts, comprising the vast majority of those that are available, the most reliable? The King James Bible and the New King James are English translations based upon those later texts, the so-called majority text. And those texts include the familiar words of conclusion to this Lord's prayer, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Typically, the earlier Greek texts do not include those words, and while there are actually very, very few differences of any substance between these two groups of texts, the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer is one of the major examples

of a difference.

So which is it? Should we consider the oldest manuscripts to be the most reliable as representing what the original authors actually wrote? Or should the later manuscripts be considered the most reliable on account of their number and dominance as time went on? For our purposes today, therefore, are these words, “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” part of the Bible or not?

That is a question that does not have a uniform and consistent answer among God’s people. People disagree on that question, scholars disagree among those who have studied this issue at great length. Some people are particularly adamant that the later, majority text is the most accurate, which is why they consider only the King James or the New King James to be acceptable translations. But again, let me emphasize, the question is not one of whether or not we believe the Bible is God’s word. Further, I would add, most of the differences are minor and rather inconsequential.

But this one isn’t. Is there a conclusion to the Lord’s prayer or is there not? Indeed, I had to decide whether or not to preach on these words. So here is my answer, with some measure of settledness. I believe the older manuscripts ought to be considered more reliable, given their age and the fact that most of the differences are things can be seen are words or phrases that would appear to have been added to the texts as time went one. So technically, if you push me for an answer, I would prefer the older texts which form the basis of the NASB and ESV translations. However, the differences, including this conclusion to the Lord’s prayer, don’t involve additions of texts that are otherwise unbiblical.

In other words, I find this conclusion to the Lord’s prayer to be completely biblical, that is to say, faithful and consistent with biblical teaching. So while Matthew himself might not have written these words in the first edition of this gospel, the words themselves are true and appropriate. And thus we use them in our liturgy, as we recite the Lord’s prayer together in worship. They are included in the scope of our catechisms which our denomination has adopted as the standard exposition of Scripture. Therefore, I have chosen to preach on them as well.

If you followed all of that, though, you might question why my English translation of choice is the New King James version, since I would prefer a translation based upon the older texts. But what I have concluded over the years is that the New King James is, for me anyway, the best combination of faithfulness to the Greek text while translating in a way that is closest to our use of language today.

So, the conclusion of the Lord’s prayer is this, “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” Perhaps a good starting point in studying those words is to read the answer to the last question in our Shorter Catechism which says that this conclusion to the Lord’s prayer “teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power and glory to him. And in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.”

Thus after our six petitions, praying for God’s honor, for his kingdom, for his will, for our daily needs, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for strength in the face of temptation, we conclude a declaration of our confidence, a declaration of...

I. ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GOD ALONE.

“Thine is the kingdom...” in the archaic but familiar language of the original King James. In the New King James, “Yours is the kingdom!” Yours is the power. Yours is the glory. All our help and all our strength is from God, and God alone, which is why we pray in the first place.

A. God alone is our help and strength.

That word “yours” is so significant. It’s all of God, all of life. The kingdom, the power and the glory...it’s all from God. And that idea is found throughout the Bible, which is why I am not simply ignoring these words which I believe were not in the actual original manuscript of Matthew. But they are in the Bible, they are given to us by inspiration and with the authority of God. For example,

1 Chron. 29:10 “Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: “Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. 12 Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.”

So when you are weary, when circumstances of life are hard, this is your strength, that the kingdom, power and glory belong to God! It’s all in that single word, “thine...” “Yours.” That’s your encouragement in life, your strength in life! For God alone is sufficient to be your help and strength.

Ps. 46:1 “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear,

Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and

be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. 4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. 6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.”

So the conclusion of our prayer is so appropriately expressed by those words, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”

There is, of course, reference to the triune God with those words, Father, son and Holy Spirit. Thus we read these encouraging words with specific reference to Jesus,

Rev. 5:13 “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” 14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”

In other words, in the words of the hymn we will sing after the sermon, “All for Jesus, all my being’s ransomed powers.” God alone is our help and strength and, therefore,

B. God alone is worthy of our faith.

We trust in him, and in him alone. Going back to,

1 Chron. 29:13 “Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name. 14 But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You. 15 For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our

fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope.”

So these words of conclusion to the Lord’s prayer express that faith, as do so many of the prayers in the Bible. We conclude our prayer with the encouragement to ascribe all glory and praise to the triune God. As Paul ends,

Rom. 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?” 35 “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

So that’s what these words express,

II. PRAISE TO GOD ALONE.

Three specific subjects of praise are identified—kingdom, power and glory. First,

A. Praise for the glory of his kingdom.

In other words, praise to the king, for surely the glory of the kingdom is defined by the glory of the king! As I read a few moments ago, from Revelation 5, “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

Beloved, the object of our praise is the king who sits on his throne! Paul expresses the same thing with the words of,

1 Tim. 1:17 “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

So as we pray, as we conclude our prayers to God, we delight

in the glory of his kingdom. In the words of the psalmist David, Ps. 29:8 “The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; The LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth, And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everyone says, “Glory!” 10 The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever. 11 The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.”

“The LORD sits as King forever.” With that comes our,

B. Praise for the glory of his power.

This is obviously related to the glory of the king, for the essence of a king is his exercise of power. “Blessing and honor and glory and power.” Let me go back to,

Ps. 29:3 “The voice of the LORD is over the waters; The God of glory thunders; The LORD is over many waters. 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; The voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars, Yes, the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. 7 The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire. 8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; The LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth, And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everyone says, “Glory!”

That’s power! And that is how we express our faith, how we pray, by delighting in the revelation of God’s power. Do you remember Moses? And Pharaoh? Remember how Moses and the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, and then how Pharaoh and his armies drowned? Power.

Ex.15:1 “Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: “I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has

thrown into the sea! 2 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. 3 The LORD is a man of war; The LORD is His name. 4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. 5 The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone. 6 "Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces. 7 And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble. 8 And with the blast of Your nostrils The waters were gathered together; The floods stood upright like a heap; The depths congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.' 10 You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters."

"Thine is the kingdom, and the power...and the glory, forever."
We conclude our prayer with...

C. Praise for the exaltation of his glory.

Psalm 24 is one of the many expressions of praise to God so appropriate at this point.

Ps. 24:7 "Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory."

And back to the beginning of,

Ps. 29:1 "Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones, Give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

So when you pray, as you conclude your prayers, let these thoughts of praise to God be in your heart and, as far as possible, expressed by your words. "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Amen...a final word of conclusion. A word of...

III. AFFIRMATION AND ASSURANCE.

As the catechism puts it, "...in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen." Amen is a word assurance.

A. "Amen" as a declaration of confidence.

The word means "so be it." Or perhaps, "Yes, that is so." The literal Greek word is sometimes translated "Truly..." So we read things like,

Ps. 89:52 "Blessed be the LORD forevermore! Amen and Amen."

Ps.41:13 "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen."

Ps. 72:18 "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! 19 And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."

Amen is an emphatic stamp of affirmation, a declaration of confidence and certainty. It is used in the New Testament as well, as Matthew ends this gospel this way,

Mat. 28:18 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

The words adds significance and emphasis to those things which are of most important, so we conclude our prayer with that confidence. As Paul would write of Jesus noting his Jewish heritage,

Rom. 9:5 “...from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”

As I read earlier from,

Rom. 11:36 “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

The word doesn’t just mean “the end,” but rather something much more definitive, much more substantive. As the whole book of Romans will end,

Rom. 16:27 “...to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”

Or Jude,

Jude 25 “To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.”

Indeed, the whole of our Bible ends with this declaration of confidence, this affirmation and assurance of all that is given to us by revelation of God,

Rev. 22:18 “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if

anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

There is one additional use of the word, so appropriate for corporate prayers, those times when we pray together.

B. “Amen” as a corporate declaration of agreement.

Remember how the Lord’s prayer begins, with words spoken in the plural, by the body, together. We pray, “Our father...” Not “My father,” individually, but “our.” So it is this amen adds a stamp of corporate approval, corporate identity and agreement. Corporate unison.

So we read in,

Ps. 106:47 “Save us, O LORD our God, And gather us from among the Gentiles, To give thanks to Your holy name, To triumph in Your praise. 48 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the LORD!”

That’s what this word means! That is how it is to be used. It is your declaration, your words, your verbal pronouncement of the unity and agreement in all that is prayed. So when there is prayer, especially prayer together as a body, a right and proper conclusion is to utter this great word. Amen. So let it be!

And when there a profound declaration of God’s truth pronounced from Scripture or even proclaimed from the pulpit in a sermon, let the amen express your declaration of agreement. And if you wonder whether or not I like people saying Amen out

loud when I preach, I hope I just answered that question. We say amen to declare our affirmation and assurance, and when we pray, when our prayers are concluded, it is a good and right way to summarize the confidence and assurance with which we pray to our Father who is in heaven.

1 Chron. 16:34 “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. 35 And say, “Save us, O God of our salvation; Gather us together, and deliver us from the Gentiles, To give thanks to Your holy name, To triumph in Your praise.” 36 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! And all the people said, “Amen!” and praised the LORD.”