

Jesus' Prayer: Amen

1 Chronicles 29:10-13 (New Revised Standard Version)

"Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

Luke 19:28-40

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

After eight weeks, we've come to the ending of Jesus' Prayer. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." This majestic ending was not part of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. Neither Matthew or Luke included it in their gospels. Most modern translations of the Bible place it as a footnote at the bottom of the page.

These final words were added by the early church near the end of the first century. Those first Christians knew intuitively the carpenter's prayer needed a stronger finish. It wasn't enough to pray "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Something more was required. So, they added this verse of praise that sings with poetic beauty and crescendos with certainty.

The early church didn't invent this closing praise out of thin air. They found it in scripture. It's attributed to the words in First Chronicles when King David assembles all the materials for the great Temple that his son Solomon would build.

"Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all." (1 Chronicles 29:10-12)

Even though Jesus didn't pray these particular words, they harmonize with the rest of his great prayer. This doxology is a summary of where we've been and where we're going. In fact, it's a synopsis of the events of Holy Week where we see God's kingdom, power and glory acted out.

Jesus displayed God's kingdom when he makes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. He staked his claim to the throne by riding a colt and reminding everyone what the prophet Zechariah said. The Messiah king would come "triumphant and victorious, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass."

Every Jew knew the prophecy and prayed for its fulfillment. They wanted someone to deliver them from Roman occupation. They want to be set free from their captors and re-establish the Kingdom of Israel to its former glory.

When Jesus came riding into the capital, the people thought their king had come. They rolled out the red carpet by spreading the garments on the ground. They rejoiced and praised God with a song similar to the one the angels sang at Bethlehem: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest."

Yes, the crowds on Palm Sunday clamored for a powerful military ruler to overthrow the Romans. But instead of entering on a war horse like their conquerors, Jesus came humbly on a colt and peacefully headed to the cross. He showed that God's kingdom wasn't experienced in fear, but in faith. It wasn't displayed through coercion, but through consensus. It wasn't achieved by force, but by suffering love.

Later during the week, Jesus demonstrated God's power by sharing a final meal with his followers and friends. They celebrated the Passover together and remembered how God's power delivered them from slavery in Egypt. At the end of that celebratory meal, Jesus shared bread and wine reminding them of the power of a life poured out and a love sacrificed for all.

In a very tangible and memorable way, Jesus instituted the power of God's love in the simple act of breaking bread and pouring wine. He embodied the willingness to put one's self at risk. He showed us that God, who is love, is willing to risk great suffering, willing to risk betrayal, denial and desertion, willing to risk mocking and misunderstanding. In prayerful obedience, Jesus chose to be vulnerable and reveal the power of God's love.

Near the end of his final days, Jesus revealed God's glory. According to John's Gospel, Jesus spoke about his hour of glory - when he would be high and lifted up - on a cross. And so, he prayed as his crucifixion loomed: "Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say, Father save me from this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (John 12:27-29)

Living for God's glory is radically different from everything else. Instead of seeking glory in fame or fortune, Jesus advises us to seek it by saying, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." God, the most glorious being in existence, made humans to bear divine glory. We're to "let our light shine" so that others may "see God's glory."

The goal of all of life is to give God the glory. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,” says the Apostle Paul. Or as The Westminster Catechism says, the chief end of human life is “to glorify and enjoy God forever.” We do this on sunny days and on the darkest of days.

In a prison camp in World War II, on a cold, oppressive night, hundreds of prisoners of war were beaten and then yelled at for an hour by the commander. They were ordered back to their dark barracks and told to be quiet.

In the stillness, someone somewhere started praying the Lord’s Prayer. Some prisoners lying next to him joined in. The prayer was overheard by prisoners in other barracks. One by one, they joined in the prayer until the prayer concluded with “Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory”.

Hundreds of prisoners joined their voices in a powerful, growing, and defiant prayer, punctuated at the end with a thunderous, “AMEN!” And then, the tables were turned. The prisoners threw off their spiritual and psychological shackles in the darkest of days, and were able to continue on in the worst of circumstances.

The great 20th century theologian Karl Barth put it this way: “to clasp hand in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”

Friends, sharing in God’s kingdom, power and glory means sharing in the victory of Christ over sin, evil and death. His victory provides us new perspective. It happened to those early Christians, and it can happen to us.

Like our spiritual ancestors, we share in the victory of Jesus after the cross and resurrection. And because we share in it, we can see the reality of God’s kingdom, power, and glory at work in life and the world. We can not help but shout, Amen!

In Hebrew “ah-MAIN” means “Yes, I agree. I get it and affirm it”. It means agreeing with every fiber of your being. This is not a trivial religious expression. There are consequences to saying Amen.

To say Amen is to say “May it be so.” May what be so? Everything Jesus has been trying to teach us in this great prayer. May it be so in your life and mine. May it be so for the poor and oppressed. May it be so for the world. May it be so for all time and eternity.

To close this sermon and series, I’d like to share a memorable experience of the Lord’s Prayer. I imagine Shannon, Laura and Jeff have had similar experiences as pastors. Maybe you have too.

A few years ago, I was at the hospital visiting one of our congregation’s spiritual pillars who was near death. She was not conscious - but I knew people in such conditions can still hear. After praying for her, I started saying the Lord’s Prayer. Out of the blue, she spoke and joined me in

praying those familiar words. When she was done, there was silence again. The Lord's Prayer was a part of her.

Beloved, my hope is for each of us to absorb and embody the Lord's Prayer, in our living and our dying. When we do, the Spirit draws us closer to God. It makes us more faithful. It gives us more energy to carry out God's will. May we be caught up in this great doxology, and swept up in the hope of God's gracious kingdom, power, and glory. And all God's people said together: "Amen."

March 28, 2021 (Lord's Prayer 8)

David Whiteley, Pastor

Jemez Springs Community Presbyterian Church