

Title: Prayer for Preeminence
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Subject: Prayer proclaims God's preeminence
Scripture: Matthew 6:13

Just outside Jerusalem's Old City on the Mount of Olives is the Church of the Pater Noster (Church of Our Father). It was supposedly built on the place where Jesus taught The Disciples' Prayer. The church and a walled courtyard contain the prayer in over 140 languages. Visitors often search for the version in their language and spend time saying the prayer or simply stand in awe before the words.

The last statement of the prayer "for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." is a doxology, a brief expression of praise that often comes at the end of a prayer. It's found in some translations of Matthew's record. We don't have Matthew's original document but manuscripts starting a few hundred years later. This doxology is found in the majority of manuscripts. Translations that don't include it have a footnote stating it's found in some manuscripts.

We can't say for sure if Christ spoke the phrase. It seems like something that would have been prayed as the Jewish prayer practice included a doxology. Certainly, the concepts expressed in doxology are contained throughout the rest of Scripture.

"Yours, oh Lord, is the greatness and power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, oh Lord is the Kingdom; You are exalted as head over all" (1 Chronicles 29:11). "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

The words are a fitting ending to our study. They summarize the content of the prayer by drawing our attention to the Father, just as it had begun. We've seen God's paternity, person, program, purpose, provision, pardon and protection. Today it's his preeminence. We have to ask ourselves: Do we give the Lord prominence or pre-eminence in our lives? Is he towards the top or is he at the absolute top?

There are people who try to cut God down to size, put him in his place. They want to make him more like people. The late Adrian Rogers noticed this trend a few years ago: "Some church leaders have begun purging hymnals and liturgies of references to God as male. In some churches and denominations, we've fallen so far away from the clear teaching of Scripture, they criticize Christians who believe (they say) in a "patriarchal religion that says, 'If God is male then male is God.'" As preposterous as it is, a number of theologians have warned that, since language shapes reality, unless the church changes its imagery of God as Father, it will effectively endorse gender and race bias! By insisting on God as *Father*, they say we who believe the divinely inspired Word of God risk deifying a mere word (Father) and commit the sin of idolatry. In other words, if you call God "Father," they say that's idolatry. There's a Greek word for that: *baloney*" (lwf.org/bible-study/how-should-we-pray-to-god).

We'll break apart "for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." bit by bit.

"For yours." This is a reminder it's all about God and not about us. It makes perfect sense that it's all about God. We need to clarify the meaning of preeminence. It's the quality of being pre-eminent. That makes it clear as mud. Preeminent means paramount. Another big word. It means more important, supreme, above the rest. A related phrase in the Cambridge Dictionary is "makes the world go around/round."

Paramount has been one of the major players in making movies, television and now streaming services. For a while the studio used the tagline: "If it's a Paramount movie, it's the best show in town." They stressed their superiority through their logo of a soaring mountain towering above the surrounding little ones with a halo of 22 stars arcing around its peak.

Sounds rather heavenly – stars, mountain heights. It's small potatoes compared to the One who is truly paramount - in excellence (moral and otherwise), superior to all the little mountains (human and of the spirit world) and surpasses all. God is the highest in rank. There is no one who has a higher position than the supreme being of the universe. He is perfect in all his attributes. There is no defect in his character. His love is perfect. His justice is perfect. His knowledge is perfect. God is preeminent. We can know him.

22-month-old Laynie has joined the book club that takes place at their house when we visit them on our day off. The girls in particular like us, more so Jean these days, read books to them. Laynie has a favorite. It's a book with verses of *Jesus Loves Me*. It begins with the familiar one and adds verses about farmland children, desert children, cold land children. One day Jean added a new one – "Jesus loves the little Laynies, all the Laynies of the world." Now, when she finishes the first verse, Laynie will quickly say, "Laynie." The sweetheart wants to hear about God's love for her.

It's shown in the kingdom, his kingdom. God is King. The first request in the prayer is for his kingdom to come, for his rule and reign to be active on earth now and for the complete realization of it when the King decides it's time for the eternal kingdom to be unveiled.

God the Father shares his throne with the Son of God. Jesus Christ is King of Heaven (Daniel 4:37), King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2), King of the ages (1 Timothy 1:17), King of glory (Psalm 24:7), King of the saints (Revelation 15:3), and King of kings (1 Timothy 6:15). The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15).

What a difference it would make if the leaders of all forms of government would realize they aren't the end all, if they would serve the one who is the head of the government of the universe? There are some, not enough, in positions of authority and power who understand there is one true king -- God the Father.

The good news is we belong to this King. When we place our trust in Jesus Christ to be our Savior by taking away our sins through his death on the cross, we've been moved from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, his kingdom. We are his and we are on the victor's side.

Our grandkids have a habit when we leave. If the weather is nice, they like to be outside, run the length of their yard, wave and loudly say "Bye." Laynie has joined her brothers and sisters the past few weeks. She

lines up with the rest, assumes her runner's stance and takes off, moving her little legs as fast as she can, waving and yelling "Bye!" It warms our hearts. As wonderful as that goodbye is, it's nothing compared to the welcome reception we'll receive from the heavenly Father when we enter the eternal kingdom.

God is in control. He is sovereign over all. He will rule and reign forever...and does now...though he allows Satan to be the prince of this world who attempts to establish a shadow kingdom. He's only a prince and will soon meet his demise.

Sidlow Baxter, "I can just imagine Satan gathering all the demons in hell and discussing what they can do to destroy Christians. And Satan says, 'Keep them from praying. Because no matter what else they do, if they don't pray, we can beat them every time. But if they learn how to pray, they'll beat us every time. Keep them from praying.'" God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God's Word encourage us to keep on praying because we're in a battle in which we're totally insufficient, but God is sufficient.

The power. One of God's attributes is omnipotent. This comes from two words: *omni* meaning all and *potent* referring to power. Omnipotence has been defined as "God can do everything that is in harmony with His Holy character" (gotquestions.org) and God has "unlimited authority & influence. He has the ability to do whatever His will dictates."

Ray Pritchard, "Omnipotence...refers to the fact that God's power is infinite and unlimited. He can do with power anything that power can do. Said another way, God has the power to do all he wills to do. He has both the resources and the ability to work his will in every circumstance in the universe. If you prefer a simpler definition, just think of these three words—"God is able." That's what omnipotence means. He is able to do everything he needs to do or wants to do" (keepbelieving.com/sermon/is-anything-too-hard-for-god-the-doctrine-of-gods-omnipotence/).

Skeptics have questioned God's power by asking, "If God is all-powerful, can he make a rock so big he can't move it?" That's like asking if God can make a three-sided circle. It's not a possibility. It's a nonsense question. God can do whatever is possible. His actions can't contradict His character or holiness. For instance, since he's eternal, unchangeable and all-wise, he can't annihilate Himself. God can't lie or do anything immoral.

God has all power over all things at all times and in all ways. He is almighty. It's a reflection of God being sovereign and infinite. No power can hinder him.

Most often we think of God's power as being shown through Creation. His power is on full display through what he made. He spoke into existence light which shattered the darkness. He spoke into existence vegetation, sea creatures, birds and earth critters. His creative power is seen the teensy tiny – the intricate composition of cells and atoms.

When God appears to Job at the end of the book which bears the man's name, most of the conversation is God asking over 60 questions. God, not Job, answers some and others he just leaves hanging: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?...Have you ever given orders to the morning or shown the dawn its place?... Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loosen Orion's belt?... Does the hawk take

flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south?...Can you pull in leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? (Job 38:3, 12, 31; 39:26; 41:1).

Beyond the creative use of God's power is what he can do in changing people. People try all sorts of remedies for their sin problem. They employ penitence. They seek absolution through good works like giving to charity. Some brutally beat themselves. None of these things and nothing a human can attempt or perform can remove his or her sin. All the soap in the world can't cleanse a person from their sin (Jeremiah 2:22).

Only God can wash away sins and make people as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). Only God can blot out our sins and transgressions (Isaiah 43:25). The person who has placed their trust in Christ as Savior is made into a new creation in which the old is gone and the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). English preacher Charles Spurgeon spoke of the magnitude of what the Lord does when a person gets saved: "Every conversion is a display of omnipotence."

God is the Almighty God, the one who is in perfect control over everything. He operates for the good of people and so ordered the universe to fulfill that purpose. He provides salvation through the awesome display of his power by raising Jesus from the dead (Ephesians 1:20). He's the one who has the power to meet our needs - the daily necessities of life, the forgiveness of sins and the deliverance from temptation and evil. We can trust him and have confidence in his Word.

More from Pritchard as he gives one way we should apply God's power: "If you start with your trials and try to reason back to God, you'll never make it. Start with lung cancer and it's hard to find God. Start with divorce and it's hard to find God. Start with rape and it's hard to find God. Start with bankruptcy and it's hard to find God. He's there, but he's hard to see when you start with your own difficulty.

"You've got to start with God and reason from what you know about God back to your trials. There is an invisible line that stretches from God to us. That line is the line of God's goodness. We rest our faith on that invisible line. That's why 2 Corinthians 4:18 says that "we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen." As long as you start with what you see around you, you'll have a hard time finding God in the darkest moments of life. But if you start with God, his light will illumine your darkness."

Then he gives three implications of God's omnipotence: "No power or will can ultimately thwart his purposes. What God starts, he always finishes. No matter how great the need, God's resources are never depleted" (keepbelieving.com/sermon/is-anything-too-hard-for-god-the-doctrine-of-gods-omnipotence/).

The glory. This word is used over 400 times in Scripture. It comes from the Greek word *doxa* from which we get doxology. The most common Hebrew word for glory has the idea of weight or worth. It was used to express greatness and importance. Therefore, it refers to the praise and honor given to someone because of who they are.

John Piper, "The vindication of God's glory is the ground of our salvation, and the exaltation of God's glory is the goal of our salvation...God's glory is the goal of all things...His perfection and his greatness and his worth are of such a distinct and separated category — we have been taught that the word *holy* means *separate*

—that he is in a class by himself. He has infinite perfections, infinite greatness, and infinite worth. The glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness. It is the going-public of his holiness. The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections” (desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory--2).

In another place he writes of needing to be “carried by a sense of wonder at the glory of God. If your heart is not amazed by the grace of God, and your mind is not gripped by the truth of God, and your sense of right and wrong is not permeated by the justice of God, and your faith is not resting in the power of God, and your imagination is not guided by the beauty of God, and your life is not steadied by the sovereignty of God, and your hope is not filled with the glory of God” then serving God will lead to weariness. “Priority Number One is the cultivation of hearts that stand in awe of God” (soundofgrace.com/piper89/9-17-89.htm).

The great composer Johann Sebastian Bach used three letters on his compositions to remind himself and others why he was doing what he was doing. He could’ve used two letters - D G - which stand for “Glory to God.” Nice sentiment but it wasn't enough for Bach. He added an S. S D G means “Glory to God alone.” Bach wasn't interested in gaining credit for himself. He was directing all the attention and focus to God.

We are to ascribe glory to God based on his intrinsic glory which is the revelation of all God is, the sum total of all His divine person and attributes. Give God the glory, the honor and credit for providing for our needs of salvation, life, hope....

Billy Sunday was an evangelist of the last century. He was a pro baseball player turned preacher. He said, “We need to jerk some of the groans out of prayers and shove in a few hallelujahs.”

Adrian Rogers, “There are five wonderful reasons we ought to praise the Lord: praise glorifies our God...heals our hurts...fortifies our faith...tells our thanks, and...protects our peace” (*When We Say Father*).

Forever. For the present time, for all earthly ages of human existence yet to come and on through all of eternity. We can pronounce this sentiment – that the kingdom and power and glory are his now. We can act in that manner. We can speak that way. Respond to God with reverent fear, be in awe, give our lives, worship.

Worship. William Temple gave a definition of worship utilizing God's attributes – “To worship is: to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God” (*The Hope of a New World*. p. 30).

In the great hereafter the whole prayer will be doxology stated in what God has accomplished: "Our Father who is in heaven and allows us to be as well, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom has come and is now. Your will has been done on earth and is being done in heaven. You have provided for all our needs. You have forgiven us our sins. You brought our temptation to an end. You have delivered us from the evil one. Your is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

One more word, the last word. Amen. It's adding our agreement to what has been said. It means so be it; let it be true; truly, truly; may it be so. You could say, “Bring it on. Let it happen. As God wishes and says it will be.”