

***The Lord's Prayer: 6) "YES!"***

"Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Matthew 28:1-10

March 27, 2005

No matter the distance, it is a long walk to the tomb for the two Marys. Their hearts are stricken with grief for their beloved friend and teacher, Jesus. They know they will not be able to enter the tomb, but it will be enough simply to sit outside, to be as close to Jesus' body as possible. They long to feel his presence once again.

Matthew has told us that the chief priests and the Pharisees had gone to Pilate on Friday to request that the tomb not only be sealed, but guarded as well, so that no one can steal the body, and then claim Christ has been raised from the dead (Matthew 27:62-66). In closing the tomb, the world shouts a final "NO!" to Jesus and his message.

As the women make their way to the tomb that day, a familiar song resonates in their hearts. It is a psalm of lament, like one Jesus cried from the cross. The women's song is "My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, 'Where is your God?'" (Ps. 42:3). Indeed their tears have flowed like a fountain, a sign of their deep anguish. Their minds are confused. How could God allow this to happen to God's messenger, God's Son? Why didn't God intervene to save Jesus? Where was God anyway? A song of sorrow echoes in the empty chambers of their hearts.

Upon arriving at the tomb, the women expect it to be sealed with the heavy stone and guarded by a soldier. They are startled, however, by a great earthquake and the arrival of an angel who rolls the stone from the tomb. In the Bible, earthquakes mark momentous events, especially occasions when God appears. Into this cemetery scene of doom and gloom, the angel radiates light and hope. Something has gone terribly wrong, or more correctly, something has been wondrously righted. The guards empowered to keep the stone in place are rendered impotent. Their authority is drained and they are made useless. They are frightfully paralyzed as if lifeless, while the once lifeless Jesus now lives again as the risen Christ.

To the authorities who shouted, "NO!" to Jesus, God finally utters a thundering response. God shouts, "NO!" to the forces of evil and manipulation. God sings, "YES!" to the forces of goodness and life. God says, "NO!" to the kingdoms of this world. God yells, "YES!" to the reign of God and God's Son. God vindicates Jesus, his ministry, and his message. Worldly power is subverted; divine power is supreme. The world can't tie God down any longer.

God has broken through the tomb of death and the force of life is set loose in the world.

The angel greets the women to bring some meaning to it all. Into their state of wonder and awe, he bursts forth with a new song. “He is not here, for he has been raised. Go and tell his disciples. He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him.” Their psalm of lament is answered with a song of hope. “Where is your God?” “He has been raised from the dead. He is going ahead of us to Galilee. There we will see him.”

Still struck by awe, but also filled with great joy, Mary and Mary run from the empty tomb to tell the disciples. Their eyes glazed over, no longer with tears of sorrow, but now with tears of joy, they nearly run into Jesus himself. He says, “Greetings!” The women fall at his feet to touch him and to worship him. Jesus, as is typical, seeks to relieve their anxiety, “Do not be afraid.” And then he repeats the angel’s refrain, “Go and tell the disciples to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The hearts and lives of Jesus’ disciples are transformed by a new song. No longer must they mourn, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Now they can raise their voices in praise, “Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He is going ahead of us. We indeed will see him.” It’s a song of praise, a song of hope, a YES! to life.

During the Lenten season leading up to this Easter celebration, we have been delving deep into the Lord’s Prayer, taught to his disciples by Jesus. Today we come to the final words of the prayer, “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” These final words are a doxology, a song of praise. The curious thing is that they are not taught by Jesus as part of the original prayer given to the disciples as recorded in Matthew or Luke. They are an addition of the early church. It seems as if the early Christians were so moved by the power and promise of the prayer that they had to end it with a song, with a resounding “YES!” to God.

It is common in Judaism to conclude prayers with a formal doxology. This prayer closely parallels a prayer of King David upon the anointing of his son Solomon as king. David blesses God, saying, “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” (I Chronicles 29:11).

Although it did not come from Jesus’ teaching, it was powerfully prayed in the worship life of the church. This phrase brings the prayer to a close by voicing the courage, confidence, and assurance with which it is prayed. It boldly calls upon God to be God and to fulfill the petitions spoken. It is an

exclamation point to the prayer that expresses faith in God's authority, ability, and presence.

When we pray "thine is the kingdom," we are saying that our ultimate loyalty is to God above all other authorities. Yours is the reign above all others. Rulers of this world may try to conquer you, but you reign supreme above all earthly powers. World leaders were threatened by the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. They tried to destroy him, they even killed him, but they could not kill his rule. You reign triumphant, O God. Yours is the Kingdom.

We pray "thine is the power." The Greek word for power is *dunamis*, from which we derive the word "dynamite." That's a mighty power, a power none other can rival. It's a power that can roll stones away from tombs and raise a dead man from his grave. We know from Jesus' ministry that God's power is used for good, compassion, and grace. It is the power of resurrection, a power to bring new life even where there is death, a power to heal what is broken. Yours is the power, O God, and your power can outlast even the strongest foe.

"Thine is the glory." They thought they had snuffed out the Light of the world, the light that had shined in the people's deepest darkness, the light that revealed your amazing love. But there was an ember that they missed. The spark was fanned into a flame that continues to burn brightly as an eternal fire that can never be extinguished. Your glory outshines the darkness of death. Yours is the glory.

"Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever." That is the Easter song of the early Christians. They are Easter people who claim the joy and the power of the risen Christ. His gifts of life and new life calls for a song, and so we sing a song at the close of his prayer, "Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever."

Easter people sing a song in response to the greatness, goodness, and power of God. They sing songs of praise and joy. They sing hymns of hope and faith. They sing on key and off key. They sing in harmony and sometimes in monotone. But they sing! Easter people sing with joy and gladness.

The Lord's Prayer ends with the affirmation, "Amen." In Hebrew it means, "right on!" "so be it." It's a biblical way of saying, "It is true." The Lord's Prayer speaks the truth. It tells us to whom we belong and where God wants us to go. "Amen" is our "YES!" to God, "right on!" "Take me with you, God; I'm on your side."

Or as Horton the Elephant says in Dr. Seuss', *Horton Hatches the Egg*, "I meant what I said and I said what I meant; an elephant's faithful, one hundred percent."

My friends, I trust that you have felt like the Marys as they headed to the tomb that Easter morning, deep in sorrow, confused by a sudden turn in events, uncertain of where to go next. Perhaps you drug yourself here this morning feeling downcast in spirit, even doubting the Easter faith, wondering what is true. I'm glad that you are here, because when life throws us curves, tsunamis, violence, bankruptcy, downsizing, depression, or anxiety, we need the community of faith. We need to carry and to be carried by one another. We can't go to the tomb alone; we need companions upon which to lean. We need others who can pray for us and with us when we cannot pray. We need those who can sing the songs of faith while we weep and until we can raise our voices in song once again. Above all, we need to be reminded that there is a kingdom, a power, and a glory far greater than any we know here on earth. God is still at work among us, rolling away stones, overturning injustice, and birthing new life.

"In a prison camp in World War II, on a cold, dark evening after a series of beatings, after the hundreds of prisoners of war had been marched before the camp commander and harangued for an hour, when the prisoners were returned to their dark barracks and told to be quiet for the rest of the night, someone, somewhere in one of the barracks began saying the Lord's Prayer. Some of his fellow prisoners lying next to him began to pray with him. Their prayer was overheard by prisoners in the next building who joined them. One by one, each set of barracks joined in the prayer until, as the prayer was ending with, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,' hundreds of prisoners had joined their voices in a strong, growing, defiant prayer, reaching a thunderous, 'Amen!'

"And then the camp was silent, but not before the tables had been turned, the prisoners had thrown off their chains, and a new world had been sighted, signaled, and stated."<sup>1</sup> New life in Christ had been claimed.

My friends, even in the darkest days, we sing songs of faith, believing that at the heart of all things is the fundamental goodness of God. We sing "YES!" to God in spite of all the forces that try to make us say "No." We say "yes to God's partially present and still future kingdom in which all shall be healed, all set right, all made well, the kingdom of love and peace. We sing "yes" to the impossible power of God, the suffering power of love. We shout "yes" to the glory of God shining over slums, over sickrooms, over a man in prison, over another man on a cross.

"Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

<sup>1</sup>William H. Willimon & Stanley Hauerwas, *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer & the Christian Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), pp. 108-109.