

## **Sermon 29/10/23 The end of the Lord's prayer**

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Now I realise that some of you are itching to jump up and point out that these words are not included in the prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples as recorded in the gospels. They aren't. What some of us, me included, may have forgotten is where they do appear in the Bible. They are in the depth of the Old Testament, in Chronicles, and they are said by King David when everything was assembled for work to start on building the temple. David's prayer ends, 'we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name'.

Over the past few weeks we have been thinking about the parts of the Lord's prayer in which we ask for things, food, forgiveness, deliverance. As we know from experience God delivers what we ask for, not always in the way or the timeframe that we requested and expected, but in God's way, and as with any gift it is good to say 'thank you'.

Let's go right back to the beginning. The Old Testament – In the beginning God created. The New Testament – In the beginning was the Word. There was nothing except what God had put there. All things come from him. We start with nothing. The Bible is of course the story of humanity's relationship with God, the way that this develops as we show the worst side of our nature, repent, become selfish again, and cry out to God in our panic. Like all relationships it is two way although it is easy to forget our part of that. God gives food, protection, and purpose. What do we give in return?

I'm sure I am not the only person who has been treated to small children who as they leave turn and say in robotic fashion, 'Thank you for having me'. The words are there, but there is nothing behind it, no real gratitude. When that happens I always hope that the habit will be followed later by an understanding of the need for gratitude.

In the modern world we are encouraged to strive, and to achieve through our own efforts, a sort of everyone for themselves philosophy. It is easy to forget that we do not achieve on our own. Those words from Colossians are very helpful with their reminders of us being bound together. I particularly like the fact that we may teach and admonish one another. That feels helpfully realistic in acknowledging both our need to learn, often from mistakes, and our propensity to correct others, even when not really necessary.

We can fall into the trap of being grateful only for the big things, of remembering to thank God for the successful operations, new grandchildren, or house moves accomplished. When we have wow moments on a Sunday morning it is easy to forget the little stuff. How helpful it is when someone just talks about something small and seemingly unimportant but that has made their heart sing.

I was reminded this week that Harvest a time of overt thankfulness is one of the occasions when people not usually connected with church become connected. Schools pick up the traditional themes of bringing produce in gratitude for the crop just gathered, several local schools have been into St James for their celebrations. The grain for our daily bread is harvested and we give thanks for that and share our abundance with others. Both the harvest service and

the tradition of the harvest supper are about a community together being grateful.

With preparation for this morning in my mind all week it is not surprising that the words have been passing through my conscious at stray moments. Looking down Digbeth at scores of hi-vis construction workers laying tracks for a tram extension, an engineering project but who gave humans the ability to plan and to work together on what we hope will assist the common good? Is it so very different from King David constructing the temple? And again on Friday in a tiny Somerset valley as we stood looking down on a waterfall having scrambled through mud, and over past and recently fallen trees. I forgot that my daughter in law had pushed me up the steep bits, and that the borrowed wellingtons hurt my feet, this was nature pretty much as undisturbed as it gets. But this was no Niagara, just a small place on a river too small for the maps on our phones to name. It still reflected the power and glory of creation.

In that passage from Colossians we hear that if we believe in God we will never lack things to thank him for. The more we acknowledge his influence in our lives, the more we will understand that his guiding hand is there all the time, influencing so much in the world. Effecting our relationships and interactions with each other.

Human history as told in the Old Testament includes displays of gratitude, Noah when his family survived the flood, the Exodus, David before the building of the temple. They are celebrations, a gathering together of people when thanks was offered to God for

his goodness. Those celebrations have continued throughout history. As we think of today's gospel reading Jesus remembers back to the Exodus over a thousand years earlier in his celebration of the Passover meal . He introduces the new concept of communion to his disciples. Remember me he says to them in the bread and wine that you share. The fact that we still celebrate today reflects a continuity of faith that takes us through the history of the Old Testament and through the New into the history of the Christian church as it has developed over 2000 years and will continue. The community of the faithful has continued here on earth, and the kingdom of the departed is established in heaven. For ever and ever.

In the celebration of communion we reach the pinnacle of thankfulness, as we remember not only God rescuing the Israelites from slavery, but also God making the sacrifice of his son, Jesus, to give us a way to eternal life.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.