

For Yours is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory

March 13, 2011

Scriptures: 1 Chronicles 29:10-20

¹⁰ Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: ‘Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever.

¹¹ **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.**

¹² 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.

¹³ And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ ‘But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill-offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

¹⁵ For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope.

¹⁶ O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

¹⁷ I know, my God, that you search the heart, and take pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you.

¹⁸ O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep for ever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts towards you. ¹⁹ Grant to my son Solomon that with single mind he may keep your commandments, your decrees, and your statutes, performing all of them, and that he may build the temple for which I have made provision.’

²⁰ Then David said to the whole assembly, ‘Bless the LORD your God.’ And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD and the king.

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.

³ The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴ But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; ⁹and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Proclamation of the Word

We pick up where we left off last week. Our PSA students led us in worship and helped us reflect on the petition of the Lord's Prayer "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And what a thoughtful, well-prepared worship service it was. So thanks to our university students whose witness enriches our life and faith here at Fort Hill Church.

As I mentioned, we pick up where we left off for last week's petition is where we find Jesus today, being tempted in the wilderness for forty days. Jesus personally knew what it was like to be tempted and in peril, perhaps that is why he included the phrase, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" in his prayer.

Jesus, hungry and fasting in the wilderness is strengthened by God's word to confront evil.

He is fed by the prayers and presence of God.

Every time the devil tries to seduce and persuade, Jesus counters with the word of God and calls upon the name of God.

Many of us have been sustained on a diet of daily prayer through of 90 days of prayer.

I hope you have found as I have that God's Word and Presence become to us daily bread feeding our hearts and souls. Jesus reminds us that it is a source of strength and defense against the lies and deception of the devil.

In this passage, the words for devil means in the Greek, one who attacks, misleads, discredits or slanders. As Martin Luther sings in his hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is our God*, "Though this world with devils filled." There are forces who attacks, misleads, discredits, slanders in this world who try to seduce us away from the truth of who God and the offer us power, glory, and success.

But Jesus will not be baited. He will not worship the things of this world that are shiny and alluring.

I spent a few days last week in Washington, DC on study leave with the Preaching Roundtable Group of which I belong. We meet annually, prepare sermons and resources to share and learn about ministry using the resources in that local city. We spent the large part of one day at the Presbyterian Church's office of Public Witness. Interestingly, the office is in the larger building which belongs to the Methodist Church. The Methodist women raised the funds and purchased a pie shaped piece of property right across from the Capitol building in the 1920's. So the church works with ecumenical partners and even shares space. Even more interesting is their mission to rent out rooms on the first floor to 4 congress members, the only caveat 2 must be Republican and 2 must be Democrat. They told us that Newt Gingrich used to rent from them but since the bible says not to gossip, they would not tell us any stories!

I learned so much about the DC culture of politics, the Church's changing role, and issues where the church can lead. The Director, Rev. J. Herbert Nelson, an Orangeburg, SC native told us how the church has at least been invited back to the table. The administration invites church leaders into the room which had not happened in the last administration. That is a small, but good change.

The status of the church has moved from the center to the fringes. There was a time when pastors and church leaders had the ears of congressmen and public servants. What J. Herbert noted is that TD

Jakes and Bill Hybels, leaders of mega-churches, can drive up in a limousine and have an audience with groups who will not invite any leaders of any other faith community. That's an interesting shift in power. But Jesus and the early church were never center to the seat of power, they witness to God's work and intentions from the edges. And in the wilderness of politics special interest, corporations, those with cash and influence get a seat at the table. Power and glory are seductive.

Jesus contrasts the power of slander, deception, and lies with truth. He confronts the devil with the truth of God's Word. He refuses to worship the devil and resists what is offered because he knows who he is. God just reminded him in his baptism, "You are my beloved Son and with you I am well pleased." Strengthened in his Baptism and identity, Jesus is not caught up in the tempter's swag or sway.

Jesus ends his confrontation with a word about worship.

Just like Temptation and Praise together end the Lord's prayer when we pray, "Lead us not in to temptation, but deliver us from evil **for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.**" In the face of temptation and evil, we return to the rightful owner, God, all that truly belongs to the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the universe.

Jesus tells the devil a loud "NO"- I will not play into your kingdom, your power. I will not give you glory. He will not be identified as the devil's own but as God's own. And when we ascribed power, kingdom and glory to the rightful owner, we are praying and praising God. We are saying to all other powers you are not God. We are praying that truth, power and authority do not belong to Khaddafi, Osama Bin Laden, or the 24 hour cable news, the mega corporations that fund policy-making or to the Queen or President. The final word is worship of God, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory."

Praising God is the surest way to undermine the work of evil. Praise is worshipful abandon to proclaim that what is God's is Gods, including we ourselves.

Praise is a way of claiming that all glory, power, and dominion belong to the Creator God. In the 1 Chronicles passage, what we refer to as Solomon's Temple has just been built with the collective offerings of the people. But when they dedicate the Temple, they acknowledge that even these gifts are gifts given to them by God's hand. All things created by God belong to God and are offered back to God for the work of his kingdom.

And what do the people do? They praise. They don't just say "thanks, God." They really praise. David leads the doxology! Doxology means "Glorify"

Have you noticed how when we sing the Lord's Prayer, the concluding phrases crescendo into this powerful exclamation point? I get chill bumps and experience what it is to praise. While the words feel flat when I say them, they have power when we sing them.

In a famous sermon called "Doxology", Fred Craddock preached on those words from Romans. "In the fall of the year, even after the days grow short and the air crisp, I still go out on the patio alone at the close of the day," says Craddock... "I sit there remembering, trying to understand the painful distance between the day as I planned it and the day as it had been. The growing darkness seeped into my mind

and heart and I was as the night. Looking back on it, I know now that it was that evening on which the idea came to me.”¹ It was an idea he called, for lack of a better name, *Doxology*.

Doxology began to follow Craddock throughout his days. *Doxology* joined the family at the dinner table, as the question was asked “What was the worst thing that happened today?”

“The school bell rang at 8:30.”

“Well, what was the best thing that happened?”

“It rang again at 3:30.”²

The family agreed, *Doxology* belonged at the family dinner table. They even took *Doxology* along when they went on vacation. No doubt, *Doxology* was good company.

Doxology even joined Craddock on routine errands around town. When they watched a child try to lick a melting ice cream, they laughed and *Doxology* showed up. They talked to the banker and finished the errands. But when it was time to stop at the hospital to visit Betty, who was dying from cancer – well Craddock felt it was inappropriate to take *Doxology* along.

Doxology insisted – but Craddock locked him in the car. After an awkward visit and a quick prayer, Craddock joined *Doxology* back in the car. *Doxology* asked, “Should I have been there?”

“Yes,” said Craddock. “I’m sorry, I didn’t understand.”³

Doxology is the simple idea that God deserves all glory and praise. As the church has added to the end of the Lord’s Prayer, “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.” There is never any situation in life where our *Doxology* – our words of appreciation and wonder at the awesome being of our Creator – is inappropriate. As Craddock says at the end of his sermon, “if we ever lose our *Doxology* we might as well be dead.”⁴

Doxology is our best companion and truest friend.

Praise and worship of God almighty has the last word, **not** the powers of this world.

All praise honor, dominion and power to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Amen!

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¹ Fred Craddock, “Doxology” in *As One Without Authority*, (Abingdon Press: Nashville) p. 163. ²Ibid, p. 164.

³Ibid, p. 165.

⁴Ibid, p. 168.