

# Sermon Text for September 27, 2020

By Robert K. Bronkema

*Isaiah 60:1-3, Matthew 6:9-13*

*“For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory”*

It was so nice to have people in church this past Sunday as we worshipped together and as we together took part in the sacrament of baptism at both services. The church is alive and well and the life that is emanating from the church through you and through your support and through your actions is shining forth. After the service last Sunday with the people who were present it was also nice to get a little feedback. Someone who attended said, as habitually people do say, great sermon pastor, and I with all humility responded thank God not me, he's the one who gave me the words. The person paused for a bit and said, well, it wasn't that good. It is always in the footnotes where you can find the true meaning behind what was written or said.

Whenever I read a book or a paper, I love reading the footnotes, those little numbers in the text often reveal a whole new understanding and a whole new world that you would completely miss if you just keep going as if they weren't present. Our Bibles contain footnotes, did you know that? As we read through the Lord's prayer today you will find that in most Scriptures that phrase that we are going to cover today: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, is nothing more than a footnote that is added later. Let's take a little time and cover that topic just for a moment. It is really important as we look at this part of Scripture that is unique to the other parts of the Scripture that we have handled to take in this Lord's prayer.

The Bible is the authority by which we live our lives. It is inspired by God both in its writing and in its reading. Those who wrote this Scripture were inspired by God to write what they did. Those who read this Scripture, those of us, are equally inspired by God to read what God's will for our lives might be for today. But we do not have the original manuscript of any of the books of the Bible. This Scripture is a compilation of writing that have been gathered over the ages and not all of the writings are identical. For example, most of the earliest complete Bibles that we have, say from the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 6<sup>th</sup> century of Matthew do not contain this phrase that we have today. Only in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century does it contain it.

We find the same kind of thing happening in Mark's Gospel starting at chapter 16:9 where we find the resurrection take place. All of this to say is that I believe that the Bible is written in a way that was completely inspired by God, and those who read it are equally inspired as we understand what God's word is saying to us. It does not take away from it, but rather as all

footnotes do, it adds meaning and meat to what we read. It gives us the ability to understand more clearly what Jesus is telling those gathered on the sermon on the Mount.

Both of our Scriptures today provide a security that is seen in this footnote in Matthew. It is a security that is found in the assurance and in the promise that God is in control, that the kingdom, the power and the glory belong to God and God alone and it draws us away from what I will call a faith of convenience which often takes this footnote for granted. I think during these months that we have been away a price is being paid for this faith of convenience which doesn't check our anger at the changes that are happening around us, but rather feeds a false narrative that we are able to discern on our own what God's kingdom might be, what the power of God apart from his body might be, what God's glory might look like without his bride the church. But when we remain focused on all of those things as emanating apart from us, then we are left with the only option of worship and praise. Let's read.

### **READ SCRIPTURE**

Our first Scripture, Isaiah 60, provides a promise in the midst of a tragedy. The prophet speaks to the people in the midst of what he describes as a darkness, a thick darkness that has covered the land. The people of Israel were in captivity, torn away from their homes, women and children separated from their families and forced on a death march to take up residence in a land that was far away from theirs. A tragedy had struck the nation, and the prophet tells the people that the day will come when this darkness that is covering the land, our land as it is invaded by a foreign power, will dissipate at the hands of the light of the Lord.

As we have been following the 100 Day Challenge I can't help but make some parallels between what we are going through in this country and what Jeremiah was addressing his Scriptures. The same reality that we read in Isaiah we also find in Jeremiah. Yet he is able to say in chapter 31:10 – “He who scattered Israel, or FPC, will gather him....vs.12 they shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, in the sanctuary, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord.”

In Isaiah we read about this darkness that has covered the earth, we know about that darkness, this Scripture is speaking to us. But the promise we get today is that the glory of the Lord will arise over the darkness and no one will be able to escape the light. We have to be the messengers of that light. We can't be the ones contributing to the spreading of the darkness. If we are reticent to spread light and prefer to be the ones who spread darkness in our actions, in our words, in our social media postings, in our words with friends and neighbors, then there is no

place for you in the kingdom that God describes in Isaiah. We know that there are those who prefer the darkness.

This Scripture that we look at in Isaiah is a great backdrop for what Jesus tells his disciples: Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. All of that belongs to God. But it comes directly from another Scripture, I Chronicles 29:10-13 which we saw a few months ago as we looked at Thy Kingdom Come earlier in this prayer. But hear these words and see the parallel between these words and the prayer that we read: read, vs.10-13. This is a called a doxology, which simply means to give praise to God. What we find here at the end of the prayer that Jesus taught us is a doxology, a very clear praise to God which is added as a footnote, a very important footnote.

We find these doxologies all over Scripture. Look at II Timothy 4:18, a final praise to God after a writing. Look at I Peter 4:11, another final praise to God after a writing or after a prayer. This doxology that the future disciples of Jesus add as a footnote seals the prayer, closes this writing, this appeal to God for all that is included in the prayer. It is a footnote that provides clarity, assurance, hope, light.

But what do we mean when we say it? How do we say it? What does it mean to you when you say: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory? Does it have the same power and the same weight as it might have for those who are in the captivity in Babylon as when Isaiah wrote his Scripture. Does it have the same meaning and weight for us today in this society and culture that benefits from a faith of convenience where our power is never challenged and our ability to make our own decisions is valued over the importance of being on the same page as the bride of Christ, the church. We live in a time where our faith of convenience manifests itself in ways that we do not even realize.

Nina was a member of our church in Moscow and she was somewhat older than us. She had her kids during the Soviet era and since her husband worked in the government, she could not take her kids to be baptized in the city because someone would see and it would cause problems, like serious problems for her husband and for them. Not only would he lose his job but they would probably be forced to leave Moscow. So she dressed herself up as a country girl with her daughter and went into the church in disguise in order to baptize her daughter, she had to do it twice because they had two kids. The faith that it took, the reliance upon God being in control to do that goes so far beyond anything that we have to deal with in our daily lives and in our daily faith here in the US. As a result we are able to take for granted the kingdom of God, something Nina never had the luxury to do.

In Italy if you are a Protestant then the general population considers you to be a part of a cult. There is an hour of religion that is taught in the public schools and they tend to teach things that are not only contrary to Protestant beliefs but aggressively opposed to it. Growing up as a Protestant in Italy you are forced to wrestle with our faith on a daily basis because all of those around you are asking you questions in a way that is very accusatory. You do not have the luxury to have a faith of convenience. These doxologies are best understood in moments of crisis because they speak to a people who need to hear the assurance that the kingdom, the power, the glory belong to God, and not to those forces which are trying desperately to tear at our faith and our relationship with God and with each other.

We are in a crisis, but we still approach our faith as a faith of convenience. We have the luxury to choose churches whenever an issue or a topic comes up which we disagree with. We just go to one that more closely fits our cultural understanding even if the faith that is professed is the same. This is a faith of convenience. A faith that is described in both Isaiah and in Matthew speaks to one that recognizes that even though there is a thick darkness that covers the land, the light of the Lord, the light of God will rule and master even the divisions that we find within our society which ought not define our faith, but our faith ought to define our approach to those issues. A faith of convenience allows our stances to be shaped by political parties and not by the Gospel. We can do that, there are plenty of churches that allow us to do that. But we will continue to be the light, and today I hope that our faiths of convenience will be challenged by the kingdom, the power, and the glory of Almighty God.

You see, the glory of God is impossible to escape. Both Isaiah and Jesus point to a future where God is in charge, even while we realize that God remains in charge now. It is sometimes hard to see that. Sometimes you can only see that while you are in the fold of the church. Like stained glass windows. From the outside of the building they might just look like clouded strangely shaped shards of glass. But from within the church, where the work of God is being accomplished, then you can see the kingdom more clearly, then you can see the brilliance of the power of God, then you can see the glory of the Lord shine on all that is dark. Amen.