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**Forever
Amen**

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Series: Let God Be God

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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We do not know how in awe those disciples may have been. We do not even know how much of what was happening they understood. We do know, that looking back 2,000 years later, the time they spent on that hillside with the Master changed the course of history. It changed the course of history because God Himself sat down on a rock and taught a group of mere mortals the difference between the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God.

“Difference” is not really a fair word. There were no similarities. You could almost take the concepts of man, even as they had been filtered through the lens of Jewish self-righteousness, and simply reverse each principle to find the mind of God. The kingdom of man was geared for the man who knew he could. The kingdom of God was designed for the man who knew he couldn't. The kingdom of man was designed for the aggressor, the happy, the arrogant, the achiever, the performer. The kingdom of God was designed for the meek, the lowly, the mourner, the persecuted, the searcher. Everything man had always taught himself about success was scrapped on that hillside in favor of a new way of life, a way of life man could not even achieve without a miracle. That miracle would prove to be the indwelling Holy Spirit who would come to live in man and do in man what man could not do.

Had you and I been with that group on that hillside, I do not know what we would have thought. (But I can imagine.) This amazing man who claimed to be more than man was talking about things like adultery of the mind, murder of the heart, singleness of the eye, and the like. But more than that, just as He seemed to have captured their imaginations with these amazingly diverse precepts, He stopped, looked them straight in the eye, and began to talk about prayer.

Prayer to the Jew was a big thing, but not the kind of prayer this man was talking about. In fact, in a few short sentences, Jesus sentenced to oblivion all of the arrogant, self-focusing prayers of the Pharisees and introduced an entirely new formula for conversing with God, a formula so revolutionary it was likely to either be rejected, ignored, or disputed at best.

To be certain they did not misunderstand the tone of His discussion, Jesus didn't just talk about prayer. A sermon on the subject might have been nice. No, the Master was a master at application-oriented instruction. He didn't espouse the theological complexities of finite man interacting with an infinite God. He didn't weave a web of intricate explanations of Hebrew words or give a dissertation on the complexities of spiritual revelation. Not Jesus. He looked this bewildered bunch straight in the eye, took dead aim, and said, "When you pray; pray like this!"

And that "pray like this" is what we have been looking at these past few weeks. Our purpose in today's lesson will be to wrap up that study by, first of all, taking an aerial photograph of the whole landscape of Jesus' magnificent pattern for prayer; and then by, finally, fine-tuning the focus of our spiritual eyes on His magnificent conclusion.

Our outline:

I- The Prayer

II- The Praise

III- The Postscript

I- THE PRAYER

The model prayer itself was a model of the incredible difference between the mind of God and the mind of man. The mind of God focuses on character and eternity. The mind of man focuses on experience and circumstances. The mind of God focuses on the things of the spirit. The mind of man focuses on things which are temporal. God's heart beats for internal transformation at any cost. Man's heart beats for external comfort and emotional pleasure. And so it is with prayer. God wants man to pray secretly, quietly, submissively. Man wants to pray openly, obviously, aggressively. God wants worship. Man wants results. God wants to use prayer as a vehicle to remake man into the likeness of God. Man wants to use prayer as a vehicle to remake God into the likeness of man. The two are not even close. They are not close, because as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than ours.

Let's just review for a moment the principles Jesus outlined for us in those few brief statements that cut through the maze of man's self-righteousness and taught us how to pray.

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1- Jesus instructed us that prayer is a private matter. We were not to pray conspicuously. We were not to pray to call attention to ourselves or our spirituality or our prayers themselves. We were instructed when we pray, to do so in seclusion, to make it a private matter between a man and his God.

2- Jesus instructed us that the length of our prayers may actually interfere with the depth of our prayers. "When you pray", Jesus said, "don't go on and on like the heathen do". They think they will be heard because they go on and on, but God isn't impressed. Some of the most powerful prayers in the world have been one-liners. Some of the most life-changing praying in history has been done by men and women of few words, but settled mind. It's wonderful to set aside a certain amount of time to pray, and it's wonderful to spend that much time in prayer, as well. But it's much more wonderful to pray aright, and get up and let God be God in you, than it is to go on and on so you can chalk up brownie points with God. You wouldn't walk into the office of the President of the United States and ramble on and on so you could say you spent an hour with the President. You would plan what you had to say and say it carefully and respectfully. Don't do less with God.

3- Jesus instructed us not to babble when we pray. Prayer was to be an intelligible conversation between the Creator and His creation. It was not meant to be an outlet for our emotions or a sideshow for another's benefit. It was to be a sensible, concise conversation between a Father and His children.

4- Jesus instructed us to enter into the presence of God in awe that we were in the presence of God. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name! Oh, Wonderful Counsellor, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, hallowed be thy name! Oh, thou who art our rock, and our shield, and our defender, hallowed be thy name! Oh, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, hallowed be thy name!" We were not to stroll casually into the courts of the King and wave "Hi, God!" We were to fall on our faces in absolute awe and cry out as we lay our sinfulness alongside His righteousness, "Hallowed be thy Name! Holy art thou, Oh, God! And worthy to be praised!" Prayer was to be a personal, private, intelligent conversation between one who is unworthy and The Only One Who is Worthy. "Hallowed Be Thy Name!"

5- Jesus instructed us that the essence of prayer was bringing our perspective into harmony with God's so that we could bring

our wills into harmony with God's, as well. Prayer was not to be a mechanical, arm-twisting device for self-righteous saints who want to prove they can move mountains. Prayer was to be an exercise in surrender; man bowing in humble submission before an omniscient, loving God praying: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". That's praying! It's not mailing God a grocery list of pleasant circumstances, but rather it is refocusing the eyes of our souls on the Spirit so that we can see that whatever it takes for His Kingdom to come into our world as it is in heaven, is best for us. So one primary reason we pray is so we can fall down before God in utter abandonment to His will being done, so His kingdom can come. That's praying. Praying is not demanding that God remove that cross that looms on the horizon of our lives; praying is surrendering to that cross, if that cross will best bring in the Kingdom. It was for Christ. It is for us.

6- Jesus instructed us to ask for one day's needs at a time, keeping in mind that the body of Christ is more than just the tiny world that surrounds us. "Give us this day our daily bread." We are to ask each morning for God to provide for one twenty-four hour period what the body of Christ around the world needs for that day. We are to take life in day-sized chunks and live life one day at a time with the perspective that if some of the body hurts; all of the body hurts, if any in the body have needs, all in the body have needs to meet. One day at a time. What a deliberate, specific, practical pattern for prayer!

7- Jesus instructed us that God is waiting to forgive us for our trespasses, but He has lovingly inserted a disclaimer clause which limits that forgiveness to the degree to which we forgive others. Never has God been more specific. He goes into great depth and detail to add: "For if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." Period. End of statement. End of principle.

8- Jesus instructed us to ask Him to guide us, lovingly, as a shepherd carries His sheep, in and through life's tests, all the while carefully protecting us from falling into the clutches of the evil one. We are to acknowledge that no test will ever befall us but such as is common to man, but our God is faithful. He would never allow the test to exceed the way of escape. And the way of escape? The all-powerful, all-victorious Word of God hidden on the tablets of our hearts; that is our way of escape!

II- THE PRAISE

Jesus instructed us to “Pray like that!” Then with all of the skill of a Master Surgeon, He wove into the pattern an anthem of praise that lifts hearts to the Holy One and causes finite eyes to behold that which is infinite. He says, once you’ve prayed, praise like this:

“Thine is the Kingdom! Father, everything on this earth is yours by virtue of creation. Thine is the Kingdom! Everyone on this earth is yours by virtue of redemption. Thine is the Kingdom! Father, every born-again child of God is yours by choice as well. Oh, God, thine is the Kingdom! You made us; you saved us; you have a right to do with us as you choose. Thine is the Kingdom!”

“And Father, Thine is the power, as well. Father, you have the might to go with the right. You not only own it all, you possess the power to control it all. Thine is the power. Thine is the power in creation; thine is the power among the elements; thine is the power among the nations; thine is the power through thy Word; thine is the power through thy people. Thine is the power Oh, God, whatever you choose to do, you can; whatever you say you’ll do is done. Thine is the Power.”

“And therefore, Dear Father, thine is the glory. The glory belongs to you. All of eternity will be spent basking in your glory, inhaling your nature, receiving your character. All of eternity will also be spent returning that glory by glorifying your Name. Thine is the glory!” In other words, the more we learn of who God is, the more there is to praise Him for. And the more we come to praise Him, the greater our capacity to experience more of who He is, the greater our ability to shout “Thine is the Glory!”

Oh, what a God we serve.

III- THE POSTSCRIPT

His is the Kingdom; His is the power; and His is the Glory. All praise and honor belong to Him, and it always will. Because His is the kingdom, and His is the power, and His is the glory... forever... and forever... and forever.

Forever means His Kingdom will never end. Psalm 10:16a says it won’t. It says this:

The LORD is King forever and ever:

His Kingdom will never end. Psalm 146:10 says it won’t. It

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says this:

The LORD shall reign forever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

His Kingdom will never end. Hebrews 1:8 says it won't. It says this:

But unto the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

His Kingdom will never end. Revelation 11:15 says it won't. It says this:

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

His is the Kingdom forever. Kings and princes, presidents and prime ministers strive to maintain their kingdoms for a season. For some, a season is two years, for some four, for some twenty. For a few, their kingdoms are intact for a lifetime or until the winds of adversity blow against their regime and their reign topples. But our King will reign forever and ever. Were eternity to be measurable, ten trillion times ten trillion years from now, God will be on His Throne. All of life will bow before Him. Nature will be in perfect harmony with His plans and purposes once again. The lion will lie down with the lamb. Sin will be gone; sorrow will be gone; sadness will be gone. All of mankind will bow in submission before the King. And what of those kings and kingdoms who shook their fist in His face and dared an omnipotent God to test their strength? Where will they be? Even their names will be forgotten. Even the memory of their wicked kingdoms will have evaporated into nothingness never to be remembered again. Satan will have been banished into his eternal imprisonment, and those who shook their fist in the face of Almighty God will be weeping and wailing in a literal torture chamber of everlasting punishment where "the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies". But our God? He will be reigning. The King will be on the throne in His Kingdom. For His is the Kingdom forever.

And His is the Power forever, as well. Psalm 66:7 says this:

He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves.

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That means that when this earth, as we know it, has ceased to be; when the forces that are wrestling for control of this universe have long since vanished, an entire eternity from now, Satan will still be gone, and the power of Satan will be remembered no more. But the arm of our God will not have been shortened, nor the might of our God diminished one iota. The power of God is the constant, unchanging force that sustains this world and all that is in it, and He will never lose His power. Never. His is the power forever.

His is the glory, forever, as well. That's what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 104:31a. There he said this:

The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever:

It's what Paul meant in Romans 11:36 when he penned:

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

It's what Peter meant when he wrote in II Peter 3:18:

But grow in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

His is the Glory forever. The very purpose of eternity is to give man the opportunity to do what he was created to do: freely receive the glory of God without the limitations of evil, and freely return the glory of God without the reservations of the flesh. God created time as a parenthesis for the benefit of demonstrating His glory to man. Once the curtain of time has been lifted and the unending, unchanging drama of eternity has begun, the constraints of time will be removed, and man will experience both the quality and the quantity of that existence known as eternal life, a life designed for a full revelation of Holiness of the Creator to the creature. His is the glory forever...and forever... and forever.

His is the Kingdom; His is the Power; His is the Glory Forever. That is what the writer of Jude was saying in verse 25:

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

It means that because God is who He is, He owns the right to all of life. It means that because God is who he is, He owns the might to exercise that right, and because God is who He is, He is deserving of nothing but total allegiance, total surrender,

and total praise; and it means that He has designed an entire eternity for us to bask in His presence and worship Him for who He is: the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving eternal God. Thus, Jesus has said, “When you pray, praise like this... “Thine is the kingdom, thine is the power, and thine is the glory...forever.”

When you pray, pray like that. And as you live, live like that. Live this life in this world as though this life and this world were what they are: a fleeting journey that takes but a microsecond in time, preparing us for and taking us to our final destination, which is an indescribable life in an indescribable home in the presence of Almighty God for all eternity. It means live in such a way that the world around you can see that this world is not your home, nor is it even the place of your temporary citizenship. Your citizenship is in heaven, and it ought to show.

When you pray, pray like that. And may your prayers but echo the commitment in your life to that principle. There will be at least three results if you do:

1- Your pursuits will change. If His is the Kingdom forever, then why labor for treasures that will perish? Why focus the lens of your life on pursuing things that will one day erupt in flames and disappear? For even if everything you are working for were to last as long as you live (and that is a horrendous presumption), should you, in the process of working for it, forfeit even a fraction of 1% of the treasures you could have been laying up in heaven, you will have made a terrible trade; because this world is a vapor, that appears for a moment, and then vanishes away. Eternity, on the other hand, and the treasures of eternity will be yours for the endless ages yet unborn. One soul touched, one life changed, one heart mended in the name of Christ and in the energy of Christ will be more valuable than the greatest fortune amassed by the wealthiest man in the world, more valuable than the strongest army ever conceived, more valuable than the greatest accomplishments by the most talented of men. Beloved, what are you giving your life for? Something that will not even exist 100 years from today? Or something that will never, ever cease to be a trophy in the eyes of God? If you pray as Jesus prayed and live as Jesus lived, your pursuits ought to change.

2- Your perspective ought to change, too. You ought to begin to see the trials of this life as heavenly sandpaper, taking off the rough edges that don't belong in eternity, preparing you

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for a kind of glory that only those who have the mind of Christ can enjoy. Pain, persecution, and pressure will cease to be the undeserved curse of a wicked world and begin to be the heaven-sent blessings of a loving God who takes even the storms of this life and uses them to grow the most beautiful flowers ever to bloom in the garden of eternity.

Your perspective of evangelism ought to change, as well. Because, not only is heaven forever and ever, so is hell. Peter spoke in II Peter 2:17 of those who were like...

...wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.

In Jude, verse 13, they were described as:

Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Revelation 20:10 spells out the endlessness of an eternal hell with these words:

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Here's an assignment: Look up the words "tormented" and "forever" and meditate on those passages. Do a study of Mark 9:43-49, and then ask yourself how we can live with, live by, work with, or walk by men and women and boys and girls who have never entered into a relationship with God and remain silent. Hell is eternal. Hell is forever. And hell is reality for everyone who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior. His is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, and worshipping Him for that fact ought to change our perspective of evangelism.

3- Finally, the "forever" in that prayer ought to change our concept of praise. You and I have a lot to praise God for, even when our worlds are falling apart. Beside a hospital bed, at a graveside, in the midst of a crisis, in the depths of deep misunderstandings, we have enough reason to praise God to organize a personal choir and go out on the streets and sing songs of victory till the Lord returns. Sure, the pain is real, but the reality of an eternity with no pain is reason enough to sing. Sure, the struggle is hard, but an eternity with no sin is reason enough to sing. Sure, the labor is hard, and the laborers are few, but an eternity at the feet of Jesus is reason enough to sing.

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The times when the sky overhead is the blackest is the greatest time of all to sing, for we have a melody written on the tablets of our hearts that derives its harmony from the spiritual blessings that echo from the strains of the enemy's taunts. The deeper the valley, the sweeter the music; the darker the sky, the richer the sounds. Christians were designed for praise. We were designed to glorify our God day and night until He comes again. And the more we praise Him, the more we ought to want to praise Him.

And now we know how to praise Him. We can move through our days making melody in our hearts to the Lord, singing thine is the kingdom; "thine is the power; and thine is the glory..."

*"Oh, dear Lord, Thine is the Kingdom forever...
Thine is the power forever...
and Thine is the glory...
forever... and forever... and forever...
Amen!"*

A Final Assignment on the Lord's Prayer

1- Take a piece of paper and list three reasons why you think God intended prayer to be basically a private matter. Make application to your own life. How can you keep your prayers from becoming conspicuous? From becoming unnecessarily long? From babbling? Make specific commitments to God in these areas.

2- Take a week or more and practice entering the presence of God in awe of who God is. Study again the meaning of the phrase "Hallowed be thy Name". What is the name of God? Why does His Name demand worship? How can you teach your family to be more worshipful when they pray?

3- Why must God's will be done for His Kingdom to come? How do you think that applies to your individual world? Could that mean that for God's best to be accomplished in you, that "cross" that looms so large in your life may not be taken away? Can you pray for "His will to be done, so His Kingdom can come, on earth as it is in heaven?" What if you don't "feel" like praying that way? What should you do?

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