

930411AM LORD'S PRAYER-
“FOR THINE IS.....”
MATTHEW 6

In the Middle Ages the Alchemists sought to turn Base materials into treasured gold. In our lives this morning, a perhaps undiscovered treasure lies at our fingertips. A doxology of such magnitude, it can stir our souls to the depths.

When Jesus left us with a model to follow, these three chords were to be struck:
THINE IS THE KINGDOM...
THINE IS THE POWER...
THINE IS THE GLORY FOREVER...

I wonder this morning, Resurrection Sunday, does the glorious treasure of an often repeated and sometimes over familiar phrase leap out into your soul?

Let me translate these three strands into a glorious Easter anthem of worship and praise. If I were to just put all the force of this doxology into a package, we all could grab, it would be:

HE'S ALIVE...
I'M FORGIVEN...
HEAVENS GATES ARE OPENED WIDE...

This morning I have three powerful truths that can shake you to the depths of your souls:

- I. THINE IS THE KINGDOM – WHICH MEANS – HE'S ALIVE
- II. THINE IS THE POWER – WHICH MEANS – I AM FORGIVEN
- IV. THINE IS THE GLORY FOREVER – WHICH MEANS – HEAVEN IS OPEN.

FIRST OF ALL,

- the Kingdom needs a cross.
- The rebellion needs a conclusion.
- The promise needs fulfillment.
- Join me on a journey that starts at the site of the curse, the serpent, the sin and the fall.

Look with me into the garden, Eden's delight, where death, pain, sorrow and decay all find their corrupt and slimy birth from the whisper of a dragon, the devil of old, our adversary, Satan.

- God pronounced the curse that would stalk the covenant for all time:
- Eve was tempted and Adam fell, but the seed was promised to crush the serpent.

- Abel was murdered, Cain was marked and the race was drowned because it was beyond hope, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.
- The world united in religion against God so at Babel he confounded the languages, but He chose Abraham and the struggle intensified.
- The 12 tribes were corrupted and the true worship apostatized and God was silent for 400 years.
- The Promised Seed was born and the babies were murdered.
- The Christ was tempted in person by the dragon slanderer and murderous liar, but Jesus was triumphant.
- His ministry was dogged with false accusations and death threats, but He did not look away.
- Gethsemane was like a second Garden of Eden. The snake dripped venom again and the Savior sweat blood. But, he didn't turn back.

And then, on Calvary's Hill, He died...at last did Satan, the murderer, win? Was the Promised Seed done, the covenant over?

NO, HE'S ALIVE!
THE TOMB IS EMPTY!
THE REBELLION IS CRUSHED.

When you say "Thine is the kingdom, you are saying He's Alive. The Resurrection is like the first day of a new creation.

II. THINE IS THE POWER IS A DECLARATION THAT THE PLAGUE CAN BE HALTED.

Of all the facets of the plentitude of God's power, the most astounding to me is that I can be forgiven. Listen to Jesus dealing with a sinner just like...

LETTERS IN THE SAND¹

They had caught her in the act of adultery, and in the coldness of their hard hearts, they would use her case as a trap for Jesus.

I do not know the woman's name. Tradition does not name her.

The incident takes place in the early morning in the temple court. The eastern sun-already up-casts short purple shadows among the great pillars. Jesus is seated, teaching a large group of devoted followers gathered round him.

Suddenly, a group surges forward, pushing their way roughly through the morning worshipers. Christ's face clouds for a moment, and pain looks out from His eyes.

¹ Catherine Marshall, A Man Called Peter Marshall, p. 310-319.

The Scribes and Pharisees thrust their way toward Christ. In the midst of them is a woman-being dragged roughly by strong men whose faces are hard and stern.

They are pulling her along. She struggles feebly now and then. She winces and cries out with the pain of their strong grip on her arms. With all the strength of their contempt they throw her down at Jesus' feet.

Then they spew out their accusations. In voices honed on hate they shout the vile names reserved for such women.

There are voices hot, like scorching blasts from a furnace...and others cold, as if they came from frozen hearts.

The woman lies before Christ in a huddled heap, sobbing bitterly trembling in her shame shivering as she listens to the indictment.

Her head is bowed; her face covered with her hands. Her disheveled hair falls over her face. Her dress is torn and stained with the dust of the city streets along which she has been dragged.

His disciples look into the face of Christ and see in His eyes an infinite sadness, as if the load of all the sin since the world began has already been laid on Him.

His steady eyes take in the situation at a glance. He sees what they try to hide from Him—the hard faces that have no pity or mercy in them – the looks of satisfaction and self-righteousness with which they finger the stones they have picked up. Every hand holds a stone and clutching fingers run along the sharp edges with malicious satisfaction.

Their shouting ceases as the piercing look of Christ travels round the circle questioningly, and they fall to muttering, as one of their group shouts out the accusation again.

The woman has been caught in the very act of adultery.

It seems to His disciples that Christ does not look at her at all. He is watching those men who try to hide the stones they carry in their hands. They are ready – her self-appointed judges-to throw them at the poor defenseless creature on the ground, for it is the law—the sacred law of Moses—that such shall be stoned to death.

If He chooses to repudiate the law, the priests can accuse Him of being no Prophet. He had said that He came to fulfill the law, not to *destroy* it.

If He permits the woman's stoning, He will clash with the Roman authorities.

He does not speak. Stooping down, He slowly, deliberately begins to write in the dust at His feet. This is the only time we know of His writing anything...and no one knows what He wrote.

Some ancient scholars believe that He traced there in the dust a catalog of human sin. Perhaps He looks up at a tall man, with graying hair and piercing blue eyes, and traces the word "Extortioner"—and the man turns and flees into the crowd.

Christ looks up into the faces of the men standing in the circle, a steadily—with eyes that never blink—he speaks to them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (John 8:7).

His keen glance rests upon the woman's accusers one by one. Then He writes in the sand at their feet—letter after letter. They watching his finger—fascinated, as it travels up and down—up and down. They cannot watch without trembling.

Looking into their faces, Christ sees into the yesterdays that lie deep in the pools of memory and conscience. He sees into their very hearts, and that moving finger writes on...Idolater...Liar...Drunkard...Murderer...Adulterer...

There is the thud of stones after stone falling on the pavement. Not many of the Pharisees are left. One by one, they creep away—like animals—slinking into the shadows...shuffling off into the crowded streets to lose themselves in the multitudes.

But no stones have been thrown. They lie around the woman on the pavement. They have dropped them where they stood, and now she is left alone at the feet of Christ.

The stillness is broken only by her sobbing. She still has not lifted her head...

And now Christ looks at her. He does not speak for a long moment.

Then, with eyes full of understanding, He says softly: "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" (John 8:10). And she answers, "No man, Lord."

That is all the woman says from beginning to end. She has no excuse for her conduct. She makes no attempt to justify what she has done. And Christ looking at her, seeing the tear-stained cheeks and her eyes red with weeping, seeing further into her hearts, seeing the contrition there, says to her: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8:11).

What a strange verdict for the Nazarene to pass. There has been no doubt of her guilt, and likewise there is no doubt about His attitude toward it.

What He here says is not that He acquits the woman, but that He forgives her.

Not that He absolves her from blame, but that He absolves her from guilt. Not that He condones the act, but that He does not condemn her for it—He forgives her instead.

Perhaps He smiles upon her, as she slowly raises her eyes, a slow, sad smile of one Who knew that He Himself has to pay the price of that absolution.

And it may be that His finger writes again in the dust, tracing this time the outline of a cross or the shape of a hill—a hill shaped like a skull.

No, we do not know her name, nor where she lived, nor who she was. But of this we can be sure—she was never the same again. She was a changed woman from that moment. Of that we can be sure.

She has looked into the eyes of Christ. She has seen God. She has been accused, convicted, judged, but not condemned. *She has been forgiven!*

And now her head is up. Her eyes are shining like stars, for has she not seen the greatest miracle of all?—That God is willing, for Christ's sake, to forgive sinners like you and me.

For we are all sinners...guilty of different kinds of sin, no doubt.

We, too, may be forgiven, no matter what type or kind of transgressions we have committed. That we may be forgiven is the greatest miracle of them all.

God is willing to forgive us, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

That is the basis and the only basis for our forgiveness.

We have no greater need today than this—the need of forgiving one another.

But there is a stern condition to be met, if you and I are to be forgiven...There must be no malice in your heart against anyone in the whole world. There must be no refusal on your part to forgive anyone else...whatever he or she may have done...no matter how wrong they were...or how innocent you were. Remember Christ to those pounding, crushing Christ/spikes to cross—"Father, forgive them."

If you hug to yourself any resentment against anybody else, you destroy the bridge by which God would come to you. If you do not forgive other people, you yourself can never feel forgiven, because you will never be forgiven.

How can I be so sure about that? Simply because Jesus said so..."But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6:15).

Jesus was not sentimental about the alternatives. He was blunt and honest. In other words, if you will forgive others when they offend you, then your Heavenly Father will forgive you too. But if you refuse to forgive others, then your Heavenly Father will not, indeed cannot, forgive you your offenses.

So—if you would have peace in your heart—if you would know the forgiveness of God—it is a case of forgive—or else.

You and just like me in John, Chapter 8 (Letters in the Sand???)

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN? SIMPLY:

I AM FORGIVEN!

The cursed sentence of death abolished.
The dreadful stain and its guilt are gone!

III. Finally, thine is the glory forever

- But how? What was the plan?
- God wanted us to walk and talk with him in eden. But, we chose our own way and we're heading to the lake of fire.
- So god said he would invade flesh, space, time, sorrow and pain for us.
- Emmanuel...god was in christ to open the gates that closed at eden.
- Jesus said "it is finished." The curtain was torn open and the way to god was clear.
- The past twenty centuries have screamed: he's alive. If not, where's the corpse?
- I'm forgiven – if not, why the cross?

Heaven's gates are opened wide..if not, why the book, the blood and the blessed hope?

Listen to these piercing thoughts and answer this question. Who alone could throw the gates of heaven open?

He is alive – so there is a kingdom...
I'm forgiven – so there is power...
Heaven's gates are open wide –
So there is glory to behold – forever! Amen.

“NO MAN’S HANDS”

The Master had met an ignominious end.
And for them there was no future.
It was back to the old life.
Back to boats for Peter and his pals...

What none of them knew was the titanic triumphs taking place out beyond the narrow horizons of their little selves. They could not see much beyond their tears and heartache. They were so preoccupied with their own personal problems and grief they could not grasp what was happening at the grave. They were sunk down in sadness. Outside, God was active in great glory.

The divine events of that weekend rival in majestic mystery those stupendous exchanges which took place at Calvary. They are beyond our human capacity to fully comprehend. It was God moving in enormous power, yet without public fanfare or display. It was God achieving His purpose, overwhelming every force set against Him, yet unwitnessed and unheralded except by angelic hosts...

Quickened, enlivened, energized by God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son Himself, He simply cast off the constrictions surrounding Him. He was alive in a radiant new dimension of supernatural living, instantaneously.

No man's hands unwrapped those heavy spices around Him.

No man's hands unwound those windings that bound Him.

No man's hands loosed Him and let Him go.

No man's hands rolled the great rock door away.

No man's hands broke the seal set upon the tomb.

No man's hands struck the guards to the ground outside.
This was only and all the work of God!

No night was ever darker than the night that stone was rolled to seal the tomb of the Light of the World. Yet with God nothing shall be impossible. With God there is always the hope of an Easter morning.

No hands can open heaven's gates, but those pierced with nails for you
and me!