

Sermon #1,235: 1 Timothy 1:15-17, 2:8 (Hymns: #466, 63, 464, 575)  
11-23-16, Thanksgiving Vespers, Bethany-Princeton MN

CREATED FOR PRAISE

Prayer: Heavenly Father, God of all grace, govern our hearts that we may never forget Your blessings but steadfastly thank and praise You for all Your goodness in this life until, with all Your saints, we praise You eternally in Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*Daily Collects: Thanksgiving to God*)

**The Sermon Text, 1 Timothy 1:15-17, 2:8.** <sup>15</sup> This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. <sup>16</sup> However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. ... <sup>2:8</sup> I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. Lord this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ, who is Gift and Giver: Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

What most people know as “the end of the Lord’s Prayer” is the Doxology: “*For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*” You find this conclusion to the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:13.

Some Bibles don’t include it, because it’s not in some early New Testament manuscripts. Roman Catholics don’t end the prayer this way and call it the Protestant version. But the church used the Doxology to end the Lord’s Prayer from very early on. You can see here in 1 Timothy that this was a common way for the first Christians to speak. St. Paul concludes his beautiful speech about Jesus – we’ll get to that shortly – with a doxology: “**Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**”

These words kind of take your breath away. St. Paul’s words even sound musical. It’s no accident. It is really the music of heaven in these words.

Doxology means “words of praise,” the first part of this word, *doxa* in Greek, meaning glory, praise, honor. In Slavic languages, such as Russian, Ukrainian, or Serbian it is the word *slava*, which means glory or praise. These various ethnicities are known, as Slavs or Slavic peoples, by a word that means glory, honor, praise – a word reflecting God Himself.

We know other doxologies, like the hymn we call the Doxology, which begins: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” The doxologies we know are not just words, but words paired with music; and not just any praise, but praise of the one true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Doxologies name this God. When we sing these verses they connect us to what is true of Him. They connect us to His glorious presence.

We certainly do need this. We do not feel very connected to anything glorious. All your best intentions do not work out the way you plan. Even when you try to do a good work, sinful motivations like pride, jealousy and a vain desire to be praised or noticed get in there. You plan to do better and be better, but don’t live up to the standards and goals you set. You lose things. You waste money on things you don’t need. Your job leaves you feeling unsatisfied. Your house is not as beautiful as you want. You say things you shouldn’t. Others say things that provoke you. Then there are the worse things, sicknesses, deaths, fears, worries, a lack of safety and security. This life feels like it is so far from glory. In fact it makes it seem like glory is unreachable or unattainable for you.

When a holiday like Thanksgiving comes along – or a doxology verse is there for us to sing – and you are grinding through life gritting your teeth, it may feel like you are being forced to be thankful, to give glory to God, and to praise. You can even feel bitter about this, like: *Don’t make me say those words, I’ll wait ’til I’m ready, ’til there’s something praiseworthy.*

It is so wonderful, then, what happens in these verses. Yes, Paul utters a doxology, he gives us the music from heaven about “**the King eternal, immortal, invisible, God who alone is wise,**” and all of the honor and glory being given Him forever and ever in heaven.

What does this have to do with us? “... **That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.**” These words come right before the doxology. They are connected. You are connected to God’s glo-

ry. Jesus connects you. He is the Bridge. The glory, praise, and honor that belong to God are given to you for Jesus' sake.

He who dwells in unapproachable light, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whom no man is worthy to look upon – that's from later in this epistle – chose to come down from heaven. To Zacchaeus who had stolen lots of money from lots of people, and who felt nothing but shame and that glory was far from him, Jesus said He had *“come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10)*. In other words, to save him, Zacchaeus.

If you feel like and confess yourself to be the chief of sinners, if you feel shame for your sins, if you feel unworthy and far from glory, if you feel that your home and your heart is not up to a visit from the King of kings, the message here is: Christ Jesus has come into the world to save you. And then St. Paul writes that you **“believe on Him for everlasting life.”** Everlasting life is the life where there is no shame, only glory, honor, and praise. And it is for you. It is given to you. It is already yours, by faith.

So the doxology is not only about God. It is about you too. You are connected to Him. The life that He lives in unapproachable light, the kingdom that is His, is what He has made to include you. It's yours! This is what God created you for. He created you for praise.

Bring this into your life. Not only this Thanksgiving but every day. We have needs and distresses every day. You never know when your life is going to be turned upside down. You also never know what God is about to do for you. Because **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,”** you do know how God feels about you. He loves you! He gives you the faith that trusts and relies on Him. He lets you bring your needs to Him especially in your distresses.

Praying is just faith talking to God. The Lord's Prayer consists of requests up to the doxology, which wraps it all up with praise. When we pray and bring praises to Him, we are not just wishing. We are bringing our prayers to the only One who can do something about it. The doxology in the Lord's Prayer, which comes after all the daily needs and requests, gives such strength to our prayers: *“For Thine [alone!] is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* One of my favorite preachers, John Chrysostom (5<sup>th</sup> century), said of these words:

*“If His be the kingdom, we should fear no one, since there can be none to withstand. For when He says, 'Thine is the kingdom,' He sets before us even him who is warring against us, brought into subjection, though he seem to oppose, God for a while permitting it. ... 'And the power': Therefore, manifold as your weakness may be, you may of right be confident, having such a One to reign over you, who is able fully to accomplish all, and that with ease, even in your case.”*

God is not forcing you to praise Him and be thankful. He is instead setting before you what is rightfully yours, by His gift for Jesus' sake. Praise is simply speaking the blessings He has given to you, and all He has done for you starting with Jesus. Praising Him is a weapon against the devil and all discouraging thoughts.

True praise is not what you get from a praise band, all loud and jumpy. It is quiet – a person who may be discouraged, or suffering, or under a cloud of despair, or overcome with shame, or worn out with worry, praying even through the tears, saying: ***“Yet will I trust in Him!”*** This is what gives me hope this Thanksgiving, Christians who just keep going:

*That in these gray and latter days  
There may be those whose life is praise,  
Each life a high doxology  
Unto the Holy Trinity. (CW #400 v. 4) Amen!*