

Thursday, July 16, 2020

God is Lord, not Caesar

- Pastor Hank French

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

The oldest manuscripts of Matthew and Luke do not have these words at the end of the Lord's Prayer. It seems they were probably added by the church at a later date.

This little addition to the Lord's Prayer makes it "our" prayer, the Church's prayer. Jesus has taught us to pray, and the Church's doxology (words of praise) signals that we have learned our lesson well: it is "your name" not my name, "your kingdom" not my kingdom, "your will" not my will—"for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever."

It was a seditious thing to say in the 1st century. It is a seditious thing to say in the 21st century. There are many who arrogantly claim the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to them—and them alone. By tacking this little doxology on to the end of the prayer that Jesus taught them, the church was putting the world on notice that Caesar is not Lord—God is Lord. Whether Caesar lives in Rome or Washington D.C., in Moscow or London, in Beijing or New Delhi or Paris, Caesar is not Lord, God is Lord.

First century Christians let the "powers that be" know where their allegiances lay every time they prayed this prayer. They lived under the rule of God, not the rule of Caesar. When the rule of Caesar and the rule of God did not conflict, there was no problem. When the rule of God and the rule of Caesar did conflict, they lived under the rule of God.

When we pray this prayer and end it with the Church's doxology we remind ourselves and others where *our* allegiances lie. Christians should not make good nationalists—they are citizens of a kingdom whose moral boundaries completely transcend the geopolitical boundaries where Caesar falsely claims the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

It is a radical claim and it has gotten uncounted followers of Jesus into trouble with Caesar for over 2000 years now. It is a claim we are bold to make: "Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25).

Prayer: Let our lives show that the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours alone and our allegiance is to you alone. Amen.