

Matthew 6:7-13  
“Doxology for Everyday”  
The Rev. Dr. Jean Halligan Vandergrift  
Roslindale Congregational Church, UCC, Roslindale, MA  
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 29, 2021

*Introduction: This is our third summer sermon dealing with the Lord’s Prayer. I am reading from the Contemporary English Version. Matthew 6:7-13:*

*The Reading:*

*<sup>7</sup> When you pray, don’t talk on and on as people do who don’t know God. They think God likes to hear long prayers. <sup>8</sup> Don’t be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask.*

*<sup>9</sup> You should pray like this:*

*Our Father in heaven,  
help us to honor  
your name.*

*<sup>10</sup> Come and set up  
your kingdom,  
so that everyone on earth  
will obey you,  
as you are obeyed  
in heaven.*

*<sup>11</sup> Give us our food for today.*

*<sup>12</sup> Forgive us for doing wrong,  
as we forgive others.*

*<sup>13</sup> Keep us from being tempted  
and protect us from evil.*

**When you hear the word “doxology,” what if anything comes to mind?**

I’m guessing that you might think of the praise song we sing as we present our offerings to God on Sunday mornings: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” You might also recall the *Gloria Patri*: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” It, too, is a doxology.

“Doxa” is the Greek word for glory, divine light, and praise. “Logos,” the second half, means word or utterance. So in English, a doxo+logy is **an expression that attributes glory and praise to God**. What we say shines a light on the greatness of God or the Trinity – God, Christ, and Spirit. There are many words and phrases that do this, such as: “Thanks be to God!” “Praise be!” or “Glory, Glory, Hallelujah,” the hymn we sang to open the service.

Yes, doxologies are often put to music and frequently are verbal expressions, but it is possible to think a doxology silently, or to pray it to oneself. A doxology can even be physical – arms lifted to God, or a dance like King David did before the altar. I like the

doxology, too, in Wendell Berry's poem as he took a walk among the trees: *In fall their brightened leaves, released, fly down the wind, and we are pleased to walk on radiance, amazed. O light come down to earth, be praised!*<sup>1</sup>

**The prayer of Jesus that we say every Sunday also ends in a doxology.** Yes it does. You know it: "For yours is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, forever!" This sentence gives God glory and praise.

Interestingly, this last line of the traditional Lord's Prayer is not in the oldest of the Greek biblical manuscripts from which our New Testament has been translated.<sup>2</sup> As Madeleine read this morning, the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples most likely ended with verse thirteen: "deliver us from evil." But when copyists took the very first manuscripts, we think some of them added this doxology, and the early church started repeating it in its worship services and devotions. By the time that the King James Bible was authorized, the church still wasn't aware of how to date these manuscripts, and the English church really latched on to saying this doxology as part of the Lord's Prayer.

**Why do you think that this sentence was added?** It could be because it was common to end a Jewish prayer by giving glory to God. It could also have been because it makes a very nice inclusio to start *and end* Jesus' prayer with praise of God. Many of the Psalms are framed this way.

My personal opinion is that ending with verse thirteen, "deliver us from evil," leaves those of us who are praying wondering what to do next. We've said "Your kingdom come." We've requested food. We've prayed for forgiveness. Now what? Where should this prayer take us? What is our next step? It's like **we are on the edge of uncertainty, awaiting more guidance.**

This uncertain place was surely where we found ourselves in March of 2020 as the COVID 19 virus took over! We wondered what the safest, most responsible, and best practices for church were, and while we have learned a great deal, even in August of 2021, we are wondering and weighing out the current level of risk in order to worship and serve Christ faithfully. Now what? What do we do next?

I think that Rumi, the Sufi mystic poet, captures this kind of moment: *When you feel gloomed over, it's your failure to praise. Irreverence and no discipline rob your soul of light.*<sup>3</sup> He's suggesting that we do what the copyists did with the Lord's Prayer.

**In seasons of uncertainty and during stress, we need to add doxology for everyday.** Doxology lifts us up and shows the way beyond our feelings and our prayers! **In other words, when we don't know what to do next, instead of criticism or curse, we can give God glory!** The light due to God!

I tried this practice this week. Where there was confusion, I inserted doxology into the day. During moments of frustration when the renovation of our house wasn't progressing, for example, I said to myself: "God, the future is *yours*." When I was annoyed with family members or church matters: "*Your* name be praised." I also tried to follow this advice when the news events in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Louisiana, overwhelmed: "*Your* power be magnified." When big issues like voting rights need

---

<sup>1</sup>Wendell Berry, *A Timbered Choir* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1998), 83.

<sup>2</sup>M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VIII* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 205.

<sup>3</sup>Rumi, Translated by Coleman Barks, *The Essential Rumi* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995), 228.

attention, refugees need resettlement, and activists are marching, I affirmed: “To God be the glory!” Doing doxology in the midst of all of this eased the stress and brought forth more light.

**I think that the way this works is that when we add doxology to the everyday, the light of glory that we express to God shines light upon *our* situation too.** It’s kind of like when a teacher affirms one student in front of the others. He shines a light that brightens the *whole* class, and shows how high *each of them* can climb. When we glorify God in our daily circumstances, the light of God’s glory shines all around *us*, enabling you and me to see the way more clearly. Doxology takes our prayers into enlightened action.

I remember how this happened during the pastoral search process in another congregation. I wasn’t present, but they told me later that the committee had come to an impasse over whether to recommend a certain candidate or not. They prayed and talked, and talked and prayed some more, but they couldn’t see eye to eye at the end of that meeting. They decided to sleep on it, and as their closing, gave God glory and invited the Light to shine and surround them with wisdom. It was a doxology, really.

The members told me later that as each of them returned home, they experienced very emotional and spiritual moments. Some changed their minds and became at peace with the candidate. Then they joyfully contacted each other by phone that same evening, and still later that evening, *I* heard steps coming to my office door. The chair of the committee had returned to the church building. He was thrilled and glowing, I kid you not. Smiling ear to ear, he reported: “We have reached God-given consensus!”

**Adding doxology had made all the difference.**