

I. *Element 6: “A New Citizenship” Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor 3/2/08*

- A. *Matthew 6:9-13 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. 10 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 'Give us this day our daily bread. 12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. <For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.>'*
- B. For just a moment we have to look at what is a textual problem in the Bible.
- C. If you notice, the last line of the prayer is in brackets. That isn't any kind of special God language.
- D. When you see that, it usually means that the oldest manuscripts of the Bible did not contain it.
- E. The first authorized English translation of the Bible was by *King James of England* in 1604 and published in 1611.
- F. Prior to that, the Bible was only available in Latin and could only be read by the highly educated.
- G. The manuscripts that were available at that time contained this doxological ending.
- H. In more recent years, archaeologists have discovered older manuscripts that didn't contain it.
- I. Some modern translations don't even include it. If it is included, it is usually bracketed or there is some kind of a footnote.
- J. This difference centers around the fact that there are actually several manuscripts that have been discovered, some pre-dating others, that contain the phrase and some that don't.
- K. Now these are types of things that split churches, you would like to know which side of the argument, which translation is right, which Greek manuscript is the oldest and truest, how do we know what is really God's word.
- L. Are you ready for my answer? Does what I say or believe about any of this change the way I feel about Jesus Christ.
- M. Whether this is actually the original prayer that Jesus prayed or not does not change the fact that He died for my sins and rose again that I might know eternal and abundant life.
- N. It does, however, tell me a lot about how I am going to pray and how I am going to live.
- O. Quite possibly Jesus prayed this prayer many times and Matthew recorded it both ways.
- P. But frankly, what everyone believes about the textual problems means very little when compared with what the phrase means to those who pray it.
- Q. And that is our concern today.

II. *A New Citizenship*

- A. Watching a PBS special that described the United States as the first country to be made up of immigrants, that even the Native Americans had migrated across the bearing straits.
- B. It showed the huge influx of immigrants that had gone through Ellis Island, the island of Upper New York Bay southwest of Manhattan, which was the chief immigration station of the United States from 1892 to 1954.
- C. In the first year it opened, 400,000 immigrants were received.
- D. Around 11 million immigrants came through Ellis Island before it closed in 1954.
- E. This great influx greatly changed the complexion of New York, and it became the most densely populated city at the time.
- F. In the early 1900s, the population of the United States was over 25% foreign born.

- G. At the entrance to the harbor was the Statue of Liberty that greeted them.
- H. The announcer/historian made the comment that the statue was not just a symbol of welcome to the freedom for which they were coming, but it also stood as a guard to their liberty.
- I. In fact, he stated that for many of the immigrants the world that awaited them was actually at times a disappointment as many of them moved into high rise tenements
- J. In 1901, masonry and wood tenements housed 70 percent of the city's population. Strung end-to-end like railroad cars, the old six-story tenements have only tiny air shafts to provide light and air between their 90-foot ends, they crowd 10 families into 25-by-100-foot lots, and their minimal communal plumbing is indoors only because outhouses would consume land used for building.
- K. .But still people came to the United States, even when the promise of great wealth and opportunity wasn't necessarily being met.
- L. Why would people come to America even when conditions don't promise to be any better?
- M. Even today people come across the open water straits of the Gulf that separate us from Cuba, leaving all their possessions behind, risking their lives and the lives of their family, to come to the United States.
- N. Illegal aliens come across our southwest borders and live in substandard conditions and work the worst of all jobs and do this with one hope in mind.
- O. That one day they can bring their family into the United States and become a U.S. Citizen.
- P. Bosnian friend who shared how the standard of living was so much higher in the United States. It was harder to make a living, but the value of freedom was so high.
- Q. And I even take for granted the privilege of what it means to be a citizen of the United States.
- R. But these people didn't come to the United States just for a better life, they came to actually trade their citizenship.
- S. People who come to the U.S. don't come just for the opportunities that are presented them.
- T. They come knowing that they face great risk and hard work, and challenges even beyond those that they are leaving.
- U. Some leave family, some leave high-paying jobs, and then are given the lowest-paying jobs.
- V. Why would they leave?
- W. I think it is because they are ready to trade their *CITIZENSHIP*

### III. The New Kingdom

- A. Why is citizenship so important?
  1. With it often comes a new language
  2. New songs of allegiance
  3. And overall a new type of ruling authority
- B. Whether Jesus actually prayed these words, or they were divinely given to Matthew to add to the prayer, or were added by those who heard Jesus pray or had learned to pray the prayer
- C. This Doxological phrase brings to a close the prayer of our Lord, and lifts us from our knees to go out and live our lives as citizens of a brand new kingdom
- D. We have spent several weeks examining the prayer, but until one is ready to make the shift to the Kingdom of God, they are just empty words.
- E. The most dramatic shift that we make is that it is God's Kingdom that I am entering.

- F. It would probably be better for us to lose the Old English and instead of the formal Thine, simply say Yours.
- G. Yours is the Kingdom of which I am a citizen.
- H. With this also comes the reality that you have renounced your original citizenship.
- I. I remember one of my friends growing up, whose mother was Canadian, he sort of liked to brag that he had dual citizenship; but at times I remembered thinking he really doesn't have any citizenship.
- J. And I think at 18, or 21 he had to finally declare his citizenship.
- K. It is no different with the Kingdom of God, this statement is partly sort of a pledge of allegiance to the Kingdom of God; it stakes our claim to our rights of citizenship; it leads us to claim two of the rights.
- L. *God's Power and God's Glory*

#### IV. *God's Power*

- A. One of the great benefits of being in the Kingdom of God is that, though we are human, we are granted God's power through the Holy Spirit.
- B. The scary part of that is that God's Power is exactly the opposite of what we think it is.
- C. Sign of Business Marquis: *Character is Power*.
  1. Drove by the sign several days in a row and each time I read it, I was bothered by it and couldn't figure it out.
  2. Partly I wasn't sure if the inverse would be true, *Power is Character*
  3. In testing a phrase or slogan, one good way to see if it is accurate is to ask if the inverse is true, in this case I am not sure that it is.
  4. The more I thought about it the more uncomfortable I got, the more I realized that it represents the *Philosophy of a worldly kingdom*, not the *Theology of the Kingdom of God*
- D. *Positional vs Personal Power*
  1. In Gary Smalley's, The Hidden Value of a Man, there are two types of power: Positional Power and Personal Power
  2. Positional Power is equated with one's net worth, one's titles, one's degrees (this applies to ladies also)
  3. As he says: Positional power shows up clearly on a corporate flow chart. It's whom you know, whom you lunch with, where you've been, what you drive, and how many people report to you. It's the name on the door, the label inside your suit, the right to drive the company car, the title on your business card, or the key to the executive washroom.
  4. Personal Power may not be accompanied by an impressive title, gold American Express card, or Ph.D. It's the ability to develop meaningful, fulfilling relationships; a willingness to do whatever it takes to strengthen our families and find the help we need to overcome any strains in our marriage. I include our family, our work relationships.
  5. Here is where character may be Power, Smalley states: An important aspect of personal power is our inner character, who we are. Words like warmth, sensitivity, dependability, determination, genuine compassion, affection, and caring all reflect a man's strength and value.
  6. You see this type of Power is not displayed in the kingdom that we know, this is only displayed in the Kingdom of God.
  7. This is a brand new type of citizenship for each of us. It is not just a change in the way we are thinking or acting, but for some of us it is like moving to a foreign country.

8. When we come to know the true Power of the Kingdom of God it makes us view the world completely differently!

#### V. *God's Glory*

- A. Jason Alexander, co-star of "Seinfeld", George Costanza was the 1995 commencement speaker for Boston University's School of the Arts.
- B. He was quoted in the New York Times: I am famous. That is a large part of why I was asked to speak here today.... It is a large part of the reason I received an honorary doctorate today when, in fact, I don't even have a bachelor degree--because I'm famous. I would like to think it's also because I'm a pretty good guy, and I'm passionate about my craft and my business, but it's not. It's because I'm famous, and the funny thing is that my fame is a complete accident. Fame, this thing that I have, is very rare, very strange and very meaningless. It's a poor measure of success. Look beyond the veneer of what you consider success.
- C. Jason Alexander is desperately expressing what Jesus is trying to teach us through this prayer.
- D. We live in a world that is shallow in its true understanding of the Kingdom.
- E. Fame is equated with greatness, or perhaps greatness is equated to fame and the Glory of God is overshadowed.
- F. When this occurs, we choose to live in a kingdom based on our achievements rather than on what we have done to show God's Glory to a world around us.
- G. John Fischer's comments on Jason Alexander's remarks: Greatness involves serving humanity. As Christians, we often forget that, in being a member of the family of God, we have not given up citizenship in the family of man. We are citizens of the earth and as such have a responsibility to the planet and all the people on it.
- H. The kind of greatness that brings Glory to God, that exists in the kingdom, is the type of greatness that Jesus describes in *Matthew 20: 25 But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 "It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*
- I. I have a plaque in my office that Sandy and Hannah gave me for Father's Day several years ago: *The GREATNESS of a leader is in his humility before God, not in his eloquence before men.*
- J. Then it quotes *Psalm 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way.*

#### VI. Conclusion (Servers Come Forward)

- A. This Doxology is a great reminder of the new Kingdom that we have entered through relationship with Jesus Christ
- B. It is the Kingdom into which we are Born Again, and over and over each day, we need to pray this as a reminder that we have renounced our old kingdom of power, fame, selfishness, and ego,
- C. And entered into a new citizenship, where Jesus is Lord, and those who put themselves first, ultimately end up last, and those who are servants actually become first.
- D. When you get up from your knees, when you finish the prayer, the directive for us is in this last phrase: I now live my life under the rule of God's Kingdom, by his power, and for his Glory. AMEN