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Thine IS the Kingdom, and the Power,
and the Glory, Forever Amen!

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TEXT: Luke 24:1-12 (NRSV)

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

What is this world coming to and where is it headed? I've heard that question asked lately. And behind it is a sense of disgust, disappointment, and even despair. I can't think of another time in recent Easters when there was such a need for confident hope. Anxiety seems to hang in the air with things like inflation, Covid, shootings, and the carnage of war in Ukraine. That's why I'm so glad that this day called Easter has arrived for us. It's a time when we gather to remember the only hope capable of sustaining a human life through anything. Christ has risen! He has risen, indeed. That's our hope. Theologian J.I. Packer writes, "You could speak of Jesus rising as the most hopeful thing that has ever happened. And you would be right."

Now the past few Sundays of Lent, we've been learning to pray from the prayer Jesus gave His disciples: the Lord's Prayer. As we have learned, it ends with these very powerful words: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen." And I want to use those words today as the basis for our Easter message. You've probably discovered in your own Bible study that these words aren't actually in the prayer Jesus taught, according to Matthew or Luke. Instead, this is a post-Easter edition of the early church, borrowed from King David's prayer in 1 Chronicles. And because Christ lives, we can confidently declare this as we close our Lord's Prayer or any of our prayers. It's a beautiful doxology; a blast of trumpet-like praise to God, a vote of confidence. It's a fitting ending to this model prayer in which we have brought everything to our Heavenly Father, reminding us that this God we are approaching rains over all. It's a declaration of faith that the one we're praying to is sovereign and powerful and in charge. And so, we bring everything to him with confidence and hope.

And when you think about it, this is also the perfect doxology of praise and faith for us to declare as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let me tell you why: because ultimately, the good news of Easter points us to God's kingdom power and glory, which has been displayed in a mighty way during Holy Week and on this Easter. God has done a great thing. He raised Jesus from the dead. He fulfilled his promises and completed his rescue plan for a sinful world. Jesus, who died for the sins of the world, has been raised. It's a fact. As the story tells us, the women and even Peter went to the tomb and found it to be absolutely empty. The angel announced to the women, "He's not here. He is risen." God raised him. Later, they will encounter Jesus face to face and realize that their God has won a great victory. On Easter, we remind ourselves that his is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. And amen to that!

So let's examine the words of this doxology a little more. That word "for", "for thine is the kingdom"; for is the hinge word connecting this powerful doxology to the rest of the Lord's Prayer. It grounds all our petitions in confident faith and praise. "Thine" is a possessive word, meaning "yours, belonging to. "For yours is the kingdom," meaning God, you are in charge. You are the king over Heaven and Earth. In the Old Testament book of 1 Chronicles, King David says "Yours, Oh, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in Heaven and Earth is yours." Yours, oh Lord, is the kingdom. You are exalted as head overall. God's kingdom, you see, is Heaven and Earth. And a great victory occurred on that first

Easter morning. God's Kingdom won. He is king. Yes, we still have our hardships and dark times. But we're waiting for the full consummation. As the hymn tells us, "This is my father's world. The battle is not done. Jesus who died shall be glorified and Earth and Heaven be one." His is the kingdom. Jesus began His ministry proclaiming the heavenly kingdom of God was at hand with his arrival. The kingdom, meaning God's rule and reign, where His will is done, carried out. Satan's kingdom of darkness and sin and death trembled with fear at that announcement and continued to attack Jesus again and again throughout his ministry. It even appeared that he had won the day on Good Friday. But then came Sunday. The tomb was empty. God's kingdom had won.

"Yours is the power," we declare. God, you can do anything you want. This power that created the universe and rescued Israel from Egyptian slavery specializes in impossibilities. As the angel told the virgin Mary, "Nothing's impossible for God." Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. But God raised Jesus from the dead. He did what was thought to be impossible. His is the power. That power has defeated sin, death, and the devil, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Sin has been conquered by the power of the cross. Forgiveness is ours in Christ Jesus. The angel of the empty tomb told the women, "Remember how Jesus told you that He must go to Jerusalem?" He must. He must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and rise again. All that's happened according to God's plan. The cross was a divine necessity to deliver sinners like you and me from the bondage to sin and its consequences, which are death and a life separated from God. So, God, in His great love for you and me, sent Jesus, his only son, who died as a sacrifice, a payment for our sin that sets us free and gives us new lives as forgiven, adopted children of God. His is the kingdom and the power.

He has defeated the power of death as well. The raising of Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection. All who believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. And on the last day, God will raise us up. Because Christ lives, I shall live also. Sure, I'll take my final breath in this old world. But it's not the end for me. Death is no longer a prison wall in the believer's life. It's a door through which we pass to spend eternity with our loving father. As Paul says in Romans, whether we live or whether we die, we're the Lord's. For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord, both of the living and dead. C.S. Lewis described what awaits the follower of Christ Jesus in one of his *Chronicles of Narnia* books with these words, "The term is over. The holidays have begun, the dream has ended. This is the morning. All their life in this world had only

been the cover and the title page. Now at last they were beginning chapter one of the great story which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever. And every chapter is better than the one before.

His is the kingdom and the power. And his power resides in him, in that he has defeated the devil. His power has defeated the devil. Our enemies, kingdom of darkness no longer has a stranglehold on this world. Christ has won. He's beaten him. I believe there's a devil, but I don't cower to him. For now he is a defeated enemy. He may still try to trick me in ways to; to destroy me and my faith in God's promises. But as Jesus said, the strong man has won the war and Satan's end has been determined. So the kingdom and the power are all God's.

Now we move on. Yours is the glory, Lord. All things are for the glory of God. This driving passion was the very heartbeat of the Lord Jesus Christ. His highest aim, the supreme goal He pursued, was to bring glory to God. And God has been glorified on Easter. He's glorified himself. He has done a great thing. He's in charge and is all powerful over the universe. Now all the glory, which is the worship and praise and the credit belongs to him alone. He deserves the glory for the things he has done. One of my favorite Christian songwriters, Andre Krautz, puts it like this in one of his songs

To God be the glory, to God be the glory, to God be the glory for the things He has done. With his blood he has saved me, with this power he has raised me, to God be the glory for the things He has done.

And his is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. It's a permanent thing. The end of this story has already been written. It's a done deal and it can't be undone. God reigns victorious. Every knee will bow before him. Because of Easter, he has a final word over everything. The day will come when Jesus will reappear to judge the living and the dead. And there will be a new Heaven and a new Earth. And there will be perfect love and worship and obedience. There'll be no more sorrow, no more death, no more tears. That's our hope and confidence as Christ followers. I belong to him forever and so forever I will be praising him and trusting him and serving him in love and gratitude for all he's done for me. And to all that, we say "amen." This is just the way we want it.

Now, "Amen" isn't the Jewish way of saying "the end." Amen means, in effect, "it's absolutely true, certain." This is an affirmation of that which can be trusted without question. God is in charge. He can do anything He wants. All the glory and credit

belongs to him. So let's give him a great big "amen" right now. "Amen" to that truth about you, Father. Therefore. Because the kingdom, the power and the glory are God's forever, the followers of Jesus can live with a confident hope and die confidently under God's reign. We can live confidently, courageously, even when things look very dark.

Let me tell you a story: in a prison camp during World War Two, on a cold, dark evening after a series of beatings, after the hundreds of prisoners of war had been marched before the camp commander and harangued for an hour, the prisoners were then returned to the dark barracks and told to be quiet for the rest of the night. But someone in one of those barracks began saying the Lord's Prayer aloud. Some fellow prisoners lying next to him joined in and began to pray with him. Their prayer was overheard by prisoners in the next building who joined in, instantaneously, one by one. Each set of barracks joined in the prayer, until as the prayer was ending with "for thine is the , and the power and the glory forever," hundreds of prisoners had joined their voices in a strong, growing, courageous, defiant prayer, which ended with a thunderous "amen!" That war story is a picture of us as believers who live and turn to God in prayer. We offer our prayers from the barracks, for we are still at war with our old enemy, the devil. He's been defeated, but he will continue to attack until the final day. In the meantime, the world can appear dark and foreboding. We're living in the already, but the not yet, when we talk about God's kingdom. But we turn to God confidently, courageously, declaring, in the midst of all of that "Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever." For we know that our God reigns. All the power and glory are His, even now His Kingdom bursts through, and one day the warfare will be totally over and Christ will reign victoriously. And every nation and tongue and tribe will bow before him and say, "Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory." And the followers of Christ will gather around God's mighty throne and rejoice, saying, "to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever. Amen."

And we can also die confidently and lay our loved ones to rest with confident resurrection hope. Years ago, a fellow musician and friend of mine died at a rather early age from cancer. At the service, we wept as we remembered him and missed him. An interesting thing happened at the cemetery, though. After the reading and the prayer and the committal and the amen, we stood around the grave on that grey, windy and chilly day. Friends and family were talking and soon began laughing and smiling as comments and stories about Kirby were shared. At the time, I remember thinking that

this was quite remarkable. Our dear friend was dead and we're laughing. How is that? It's because we knew that Kirby was very much safe and alive. Death could not hold him because Kirby trusted in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who has promised that nothing can snatch us from his father's strong hand. That's a promise for us. And this is the basis for our hope. That's what we hang onto this Easter of 2022. Christ has risen. He has risen, indeed. God's is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. And we are in good hands. Amen. Let's pray: Father, we thank you for the assurance and hope that is ours in Jesus Christ. May our daily lives reflect the truth that the Kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.