

## Advent IV (19/12/04)

*“for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen”* (the Lord’s Prayer as we find it in the Communion).

Since we use these words whenever we meet and say the Lord’s Prayer together, here are a few thoughts for the season about them.

If you look at any modern text of the New Testament, it will rightly warn you that these words are not in the most reliable manuscripts of St. Matthew. We presume the Lord did not use them and so St. Matthew did not record them. But they are very old and quite important.

A version of them is found in the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” (the “Didache”) which is of much the same age as the New Testament - some would say older! These words are a typical Jewish way of ending a prayer, and that too shows how old they are - before the Church settled on “through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Because they were in use from early times, some copies of St. Matthew have had them added in, and so the Authorised Version and the Prayer Book treat them as part of the Lord’s Prayer.

These words are very fitting for our Advent prayers.

*Thine*: The Lord always prays to his Father and ours. He is not anxious to give himself any status. Our prayers should follow this pattern.

*The Kingdom*: this of course can be rightly referred back to “thy kingdom come”. Whether we think of this town, this country, this world or the whole universe, God the Father is its King. If we see other rulers exercising authority, they are usurpers and we pray for deliverance from them.

*the power*: this too refers back, to “thy will be done”. God has the strength: “Rise God, judge though the world in might, this wicked earth redress.” God has the power, but this is the time of His patience, to give a space for repentance.

In both these phrases, we are to notice the peculiar intermediate time in which we find ourselves as Christians - the time in which the middle clauses of the Lord’s Prayer make sense as we wait for God to bring time to an end.

*the glory*: we can refer this back to “hallowed be thy name”. The promise that awaits us is the clarity of the Vision of God, when we shall see him as he really is, in all his glory.

*for ever and ever*: this is not a very good translation. The Greek and the Hebrew before it would be better translated “unto ages of ages”. All times, all divisions of time and of eternity, are God’s and those who he calls to share in them.

*Amen*. A bad, but early translation, is “so be it”. A better, and earlier, translation is “it is already done”. God does not doubt or hesitate; what he plans, he does. We declare our trust in him. And our hope; as the Didache puts it: “Remember, Lord thy Church to *deliver it from all evil* and to perfect it in thy love; and gather it together from the four winds - even the Church which has been made *holy* - into thy *kingdom* which thou hast prepared for it; for thine is the *power* and the *glory* for ever and ever. May grace come and may this world pass away”.

Now it is useful to remember that the Lord’s prayer was taught by the Lord to his disciples - by a Jew to other faithful Jews. He and they offered it to the Father for the hope of Israel. We cannot help but use it in the name of the Lord, and remembering his Incarnation (as at this time), his Passion and Resurrection, and looking for his coming again in glory to judge both the quick and the dead, before he “hands the kingdom over to the Father”.

The celebration of Christmas is, if you like, the compensation we are allowed for this time of waiting until the Lord come. “Maran atha”. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”.