

To God Be the Glory Forever and Ever! Amen!

A Sermon based on 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

This is one of those stories where it's so weird, you just know it has to be true! John Jacobs, a defense lawyer in New York City, receives numerous calls on his cell phone every day. While that doesn't seem unusual it is when you consider that John's been dead for over six years. You see, his family buried him with his cell phone. And his widow continues to pay his monthly phone bill so she and her two sons can still call and leave him messages. His widow who regularly calls John to update her husband with sports news and how their sons are doing says, "Some people talk to God. I talk to my deceased husband." The problem is, John can't return the call. He can't even check his messages. You see, his phone is.. if you'll pardon the pun... in a dead zone.

Now a lot of people view prayer as Mr. Jacob's wife does--a conversation with no one really listening and no one ever responding. It's really no conversation at all. Just one way talk into a phone with no one on the other end. How do we know God really does hear our prayers? And if he does hear, how do we know he'll answer? After all, it seems that so many of our prayers go unanswered. Are we just wasting our time? King David has an answer. Listen to him as he prays to God in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13...

10 David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. 11 Yours, O 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, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 12 Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. 13 Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

What if you were counting the offerings on Sunday and after after took the plates into the sacristy and counted, and then recounted, you still found that \$6 billion dollars had been given to support the ministry here at Light of the World? How would you respond?

King David was an old man by now, growing weak and tired. He knew the end of his life was near. And he wanted to build a temple for God, one so magnificent and beautiful that it would testify to the goodness God had shown him. But... God said, "No. Your hands are too bloody. You're a warrior. You're not to build the temple, but your son will build the temple." So David, not allowed to build the temple himself, did all the prep work he could to make it an easy task for his son. He got the blueprints and temple designs. He started gathering materials. And he began the fund-raising with a special offering for the building project.

And boy, did the gifts pour in! When David had the offerings counted, there was almost \$6 billion worth of gold, silver, bronze and iron at today's precious metal prices. And this offering prompted David's doxology -- his prayer of praise. David rejoiced, not in the wealthy people he had living in his kingdom, not in the great amounts that he'd been able to raise, not in how awesome the temple was going to be, but in God's great power and glory that have accomplished all these things.

Just think of all the awesome things God's power has done. King David piled on the nouns describing God's power in his prayer. ***Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor... Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom... wealth and honor ...strength and power...*** God has the power to create the universe with its billions of stars, most of which shine far brighter than our sun. He created the intricacies of our human bodies, knitting us together in the womb. He is the true and only king maker giving wealth and power to those he wishes and ending the lives of others.

It's been estimated that our nation has 28,000 nuclear warheads. Compared to the power of God, 28,000 nuclear warheads is like a BB gun. He turned a stuttering Moses into the leader of a great nation and defeated the Egyptian army for Israel without a single spear, sword or arrow. He turned Gideon, least among the weakest tribe, into a conquering hero with torches, trumpets and jars. He turned David from a lowly shepherd into a giant slayer with a single stone and then into a powerful King.

He brought down the Empires of those who considered themselves the Great. Assyria fell, Babylon fell, Persia fell, Greece fell, Rome fell, Napoleon fell, Hitler fell, the Iron Curtain rusted almost over night. No wonder we confess, "Thine is the power!"

But... do you believe it? Do you really? Does your prayer life demonstrate that you trust in God's power? Or are you more like the one James, the brother of Jesus, chides: "***6But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.***" (James 1:6-8)

Or maybe we do trust in his power, but then get angry when he doesn't use it as we wish! "God does have the power to make strong and wealthy," we confess. But then we gripe, "So why doesn't he do those things for me?! Why doesn't he make me strong and take away my physical, financial, emotional weakness?! Why doesn't he make me wealthy?" We get frustrated and upset when God doesn't answer our prayers in our way or on our timetables.

And really we act like the kid who gets fifty birthday presents but complains that he didn't get the game he wanted or that the brand new bike he got is green, not blue like he wanted! That spoiled brat would deserve to lose the gifts that he received, wouldn't he? Just like we deserve to lose God's blessings for presuming to only in an advisory capacity and then complaining that he doesn't do things our way. We deserve hell. And in contrast to God's awesome power, you and I are powerless to do a thing about it.

We ought to confess as King David did right after this hymn of praise... "***But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.***" (1 Chronicles 29:14-16)

We would do well to remember that next time we complain about our lot in life: that it's God who put us there. It's God who chose to bless us the way he has. When we complain we really complain against

him. When Job lost everything and his wife counseled him to curse God and die, he wisely replied, "**You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?**" (Job 2:10)

Thank God that he doesn't hold it against us and give us what our sins deserve. You see, God doesn't just use his power to create and preserve creation. And his kingdom isn't just his rule over the universe. He also uses his power to save and rules in our hearts through the Word...

When King David offered his prayer of praise he called God "**LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.**" Those titles would call to mind the gracious promises of the LORD (which you know in all capital letters is Jehovah or Yahweh) who revealed himself as "**the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.**" (Exodus 34:6-7) -- the God who promised to Jacob, aka Israel, "**All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.**" (Genesis 28:14) -- God who promised to send the Messiah, their Savior from sin, in the person of Jesus. And these promises last to this day, and "from everlasting to everlasting."

Do you want to see God's power in your life? Do you want to see him reign in his kingdom? Then look to the cross. By the power of the cross he utterly defeated Satan. He destroyed the gates of hell! He overcame our sin, taking away all of our complaints to God for the way he uses his power, removing our weak and wavering prayers that don't trust his promises to use his power for our good, to rule all things for our good. You and I are forgiven! We are heaven bound! Talk about power! No wonder we confess "thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever!"

David saw all that God had done for him and couldn't help but pray to him and praise him in thanks. And neither can we. Pray boldly to him, for his is the power -- there is no problem he can't handle. Pray confidently to him, for his is the Kingdom -- as he rules all things for the good of his people. Recognizing the forgiveness he brings leads us to pray not just before meals as we offer our heartfelt thanks to God.

And praise him with all your heart, not just by your words and prayers, but by your actions -- by the way you live your life for him and by the generous gifts you bring. Recognizing the forgiveness he brings leads us to gladly offer our time back to God in study and service and worship. It leads us to write a generous check or place cash in an envelope so his work can go on here and elsewhere. Maybe he hasn't blessed you with \$6 billion to give. But you can give back in proportion to how he's blessed you. It's all from him and we only give back only what he's given us. It is not ours to keep anyway since we're just passing through this life. Our real treasure still awaits us when his kingdom and his glory become ours forever and ever.

C.S. Lewis once argued that praying was like advising God how to run the world. "**Wouldn't it be wiser,**" he argued, "**to assume that he knows best?**" But when a friend heard this argument he replied, "**On the same principle, I suppose you never ask a man next to you to pass the salt, because God knows best whether you ought to have salt or not. And I suppose you never take an umbrella, because God knows best whether you ought to be wet or dry... The odd thing is that He should let us influence the course of events at all. But since He let us do it in one way, I don't see why He shouldn't let us do it in the other.**"

God does know what's best for you. But he urges you to pray anyway, trusting that he has the power to do all things, trusting that he rules his kingdom for the good of those who love him. So to him be the glory forever and ever! Amen! So shall it be! Amen.