

Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



1 Timothy 2:1-6 *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

We're going to diverge from our text for a little bit and consider the prophet Jonah from our Old Testament Reading. It would be easy for us to look down on the Prophet Jonah. After all, Jonah was called by the LORD God and sent to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, one of the largest cities in the world in one of the most powerful nations on earth. God sent Jonah to warn them of their sins and to call them to turn to God in repentance. It was a last ditch effort to turn God's judgment away.

Jonah boarded a boat headed in the opposite direction. He blatantly disobeyed the LORD, refusing so vigorously that he headed toward the opposite end of the known world. The LORD had every right to be angry with Jonah and judge him, and yet even after his sin was revealed and his boat mates heaved him over the rail into the sea, the LORD had mercy on Jonah. As we all know, God sent that great fish to swallow him and deliver him safely to shore where God would call him to go to Nineveh a second time.

So Jonah finally did what the LORD wanted him to do. We know from the middle chapters of the book that he warned the city of Nineveh of the Judgment of God and called upon them to repent of their sins and look to God for mercy. And in what might be considered one of the greatest conversions that ever took place, by a true miracle of divine grace the entire city – from the least to the greatest – was moved to repent and turn to the Lord and the Lord withheld His anger. Incredible that the Lord would use stubborn Jonah to bring about such redemption to thousands.

Now we might expect that Jonah would be happy or at least find in Nineveh's penitence a measure of fulfillment for his ministry. But Jonah wasn't happy about Nineveh's penitence...He was angry. He complained to the LORD. He revealed his unloving heart, saying essentially in the verses before our Old Testament reading, ***"See, that's why I didn't want to go to Nineveh in the first place...I just knew you would go and have mercy on them."*** (cf. Jonah 4:2)

So yes, considering all those things, it would be an easy thing to look down our noses at Jonah...but before we do so perhaps we should put ourselves in his sandals for a little bit.

The LORD God sent Jonah to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria (located in modern day Iraq) which already had a reputation for extreme cruelty and violence. Assyria was growing into a world power and threatening to descend upon Israel and destroy it—the very nation that Jonah was from. And so, with this knowledge in mind, Jonah was called to go to the enemy of his people and call upon them to repent.

The closest comparison I could come up with for recent years in America would be God calling us to go to Afghanistan after September 11th to find Osama Bin Laden, not to bring him to justice, but to bring him to repentance and faith in Christ. How would you feel about preaching peace to those bent on destroying your home and killing your family?

That is what God was calling Jonah to do – to preach repentance and faith to a godless foreign nation! Neither Jonah nor we would ever think of doing such a thing! And just that alone shows that we are

corrupt sinners in need of forgiveness. We would never think of it, but our LORD earnestly desires that everyone be saved through faith in Christ and come to know the Truth of God's Love. We acknowledge that, yet we probably really don't think of that as including *all* people, do we?

Now we may never have opportunity to proclaim repentance and assure forgiveness to our enemies, but there is something we can and should do for them—and that's pray for them. After all, our Scripture reading for this morning tells us to do exactly that. God tells us to pray for all men and *why* we ought to do so. We are reminded that God seeks salvation for each and every human being – not only for those whom we know and love. Today **God teaches us *Why to Pray.***

We sometimes put certain people on pedestals, especially the Heroes of Faith in the Bible. We like to imagine that the Apostle Paul was always bold and fearless in his proclamation of the Gospel. We picture the prophets as boldly standing before those who hated them, proclaiming the words of the Lord, and never having any doubts about where they stood.

The truth is, all of God's prophets and spokesmen were sinful humans just like us. They too had many sinful flaws. Think about the Prophet Jeremiah who tried to shrink away from his God-given responsibilities because he felt he was too young (Jeremiah 1:6-7). Or again, the prophet Jonah who flat out disobeyed the Lord God and then complained about His mercy. It's no shock that we exhibit similar attitudes.

But as followers of Christ we are called upon to fight the good fight of faith, this means we learn scripture and combat false teaching, but it also means being constant in our prayers. And so God instructs us through the Apostle Paul in verse 1: ***“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.”***

If you were in my confirmation class, I would ask you to get out your pens and start underlining. Since you're not, I'll be forced to do the underlining for you. There's a phrase that's repeated three times in our text, in verse one, four and the idea is present in verse six as well—it's ***“all people.”*** God is adamant that He truly desires *everyone* to be saved. As we think about the implications of that idea, that really might be shocking to us.

That type of love, does not come naturally to us. Nevertheless, Paul instructs us to think about all people, and to ***“offer up supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings.”*** Each of those terms is referring essentially to the same action, but they all have a different flavor to them. ***Supplications*** are prayers driven by need. When we are aware of someone's need, like the running list I keep in the back of the bulletin, and we offer prayers for them, that's a supplication.

Prayers are next in our list, they are humble requests to GOD. This is the general word used for a 'heart to heart talk with God.' The word emphasizes our coming before God humbly and respectfully, as to a superior not a peer.

Intercessions are prayers on behalf of others. An intercessor is a go-between. As believers, we have an open line to GOD and thus a tremendous opportunity to come to God – especially on behalf of those who do not believe and have no access to God due to their lack of faith. Psalm 34 says, ***“The eyes of the LORD are on the Righteous and His ears are open to their cry.”*** (Psalm 34:15) And finally, ***thanksgivings***, which are obviously prayers of thanksgiving. We bring our needs to God and we thank Him as well.

God says that as Christians, we should be offering up these types of prayers for all people. That includes the people within our church and family, it also includes people on the outside of our church, people that we might not even tend to like. And then Paul goes on to say that we should especially remember

those in authority. Verse 2 ***“for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”***

Almighty God is no party politician. Despite what our leanings might lead us to believe, God does not have a favorite party. He urges us to pray for kings and all who are in positions of authority...yes, that includes democrat and republican, tea party, libertarian, what have you. And He doesn't only command us to pray for them but why we should pray for them as well. Regardless of who's sitting in the oval office, whether you voted for that person or not, you still ought to pray for them that we can have the type of quiet life that promotes the worship of the one true God. And that goes for other countries as well. I think about our brothers and sisters in Christ in India who are being terribly ostracized by their government and obviously we haven't been able to get there. But what can we do? Pray for them, and pray for their leaders that God would work on their hearts and open up the borders to the Gospel once more.

Yes, even the very people in this world who are actively combatting salvation through Christ, God wants us to pray for them. Not out of pity, but earnestly seeking their salvation, because that's what God wants. That's why Paul goes on to say: ***“This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”***

Make no mistake, this desire of GOD is no 'wishy-washy' 'Oh, I hope everyone believes.' It is His earnest desire that all people be saved.

God sent the Prophet Jonah to an unbelieving nation with a terrible reputation...because He desires that all people be saved and come to know the truth. Jonah's mission trip is yet another proof that Jehovah earnestly wants proponents of false religions to turn from their idols and trust in Him through His Word.

The man who wrote our sermon text this morning, the Apostle Paul, formerly Saul of Tarsus, public enemy number one of the Christian Church on earth—and God sought him out and brought him to his knees in repentance and forgave him. Why? Because He desires all people to be saved, including Paul. God sent the Apostle Paul and the other Apostles tromping all over the ancient world to proclaim good news in Christ to people who worshipped idols...because He desires that all people be saved and come to know the Truth. The same LORD God has the same desires today and still equips us to do the same.

What about us? ...is that our earnest desire? I said earlier that the implications of God truly wanting *all people* to be saved, is kind of shocking. Afterall, we sometimes have trouble getting along with and forgiving fellow Christians, but at the end of the day we know that God loves them so we ought to love them too, but what about our enemies? Do we come to the same conclusion? What about that irritating boss, that annoying neighbor, that politician that you just can't stand? What about the people on social media that loudly proclaim everything that is completely contrary to your personal beliefs? What about those people that make your life as a Christian harder? What about those Islamic terrorists in the Middle East? Do we really desire that they all be saved? Or is that a wishy-washy “oh I hope they believe,” but we find a secret satisfaction that they probably won't and will receive their just desserts in hell.

Our Heavenly Father wants to call them His Children even as He calls you His Child and Heir.

This means that we need to pray for ourselves too. Because unless the LORD softens our hearts and fills us with His Love, we will be like the world around us and will only love those who love us and hate those who hate us, and that's not love at all. If Jonah, a man called directly by the Lord to be his prophet, opposed the will of God to save the Assyrians...then we too should earnestly pray that Christ fill us with His Love.

And we ought to pray that God help us to remember that it was His mercy – not our deserving goodness of any kind – It was God’s mercy that moved Him to reconcile us to Himself through Jesus Christ. It was God’s mercy that determined to make us children of God through Word and Sacrament even though we were born enemies of God and agents of Satan. It was by God’s mercy and grace that we were placed into the situations which we have found ourselves and through which God has led us to the Scriptures.

So to that end, before we look at the final verses, let’s first say a quick prayer, if you would join me: *Lord, teach us WHY to pray. Remind us that you earnestly desire all people to be saved, just as you have saved us. This was by your grace, we did nothing to deserve it. Remind us of these things, soften our stubborn hearts, renew right spirits within us, and as always, Sanctify us by your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.*

Let’s jump back in at v. 5 ***“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”***

Jonah knew it to be true and so do you. It may not be politically correct to say so in 2020...but it is Biblically correct to proclaim that there is only one real God. While there are countless deities professed across the face of the earth, the God who reveals Himself in the Bible is the Triune God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, the Only God. It is He who declares in Psalm 96 ***For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.*** (Psalm 96:5)

In our text Paul takes it one step further, not only is there one God, but ***“there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*** Nope, no praying to grandma! And for that matter, no praying to St. Anne or St. Christopher or St. Peter either. There’s no truth to the teaching that they are closer to God so you can pray to them and they’ll relay the message. God says that when it comes to you and Him, there’s only one go-between. It is the eternal Son who opened up the bridge between you and God. Your Mediator, Jesus Christ, who stands before the Father praying on your behalf, and will stand again on your behalf on Judgement Day giving your testimony at the proper time. The testimony that will be getting you into heaven will not be that you were a good person or that you always tried your best or that you always said prayers before bed or even that you went to church every Sunday: it will be the testimony of Jesus Christ. That, serving as the mediator between sinful, fallen mankind, and Holy God, he gave Himself as your ransom price.

God asks no further payment from you, no additional sacrifices. There is no additional measures you need to take to appease an angry God. When it comes to you, he’s been satisfied. As it is written in Hebrews 9, ***“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”*** (Hebrews 9:12)

Yes, those people that you might conclude are so far removed from the Kingdom of God that they’re completely hopeless cases, you were in the same boat. But Christ stepped in and changed everything for you. You are a Child of God and Heir of Heaven. And now is the time of salvation. This is the time that God has given you to pray, out of truly loving hearts, focused not on differences of opinion, but on the one thing needful and the desire to bring salvation to *all people*.

May God grant us the hearts to do so. Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)