

Sermon for 9/18/16

Bainbridge

"Pray for Everyone?"

Did you ever notice that once you become a Christian there are certain things that Jesus expects from us? We certainly do not get a free pass that lets us relax and take it easy and not do anything with our Christian faith! One of those "things" that is expected of us is prayer. Certainly prayers that we have in church or in a Bible study, a funeral or any type of service. Some people offer grace before a meal and especially during a family gathering or a holiday such as Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas.

However, I am talking about those prayers where we are to include everyone as in our reading in 1st Timothy 2:1-7. Not only does this everyone include those people in authority but the bullies, the murderers, thieves, tax collectors and so on. Even those who are in prison or should be. I have to say I sometimes have a problem with praying for everyone! During my career, I have had more than one boss who didn't treat me very well and believe me prayer was the last thing on my mind for them!

So what about the rich and famous? I often think that "they" have everything and if not they have the means to get what they want which even includes top notch doctors for any illness that they might have! But, I also feel that they probably need our prayers more than anyone!

There are the terrorists, ISIS and those who have committed such heinous crimes against others. I struggle with people that have done these horrible acts of crime and still are out on the streets. I have always felt that they should be thrown in prison and the key thrown away or be given the death penalty but as hard as it is to do they need our prayers as well! I just want to clarify that I am not condoning any of these acts of violence and it bothers me to see and hear about it and how much it seems to be increasing in the world. I firmly believe that as we pray for our enemies, we should also pray for peace and for violence to stop. We may never know how much our prayers have helped those we don't know.

It is easy to pray for our friends and family and even someone we don't know who has been in a horrible accident or is suffering a huge financial burden or had a loss due to a fire, hurricane, tornado or whatever the case may be or even a diagnosis of a life threatening illness.

So what does the Bible say about prayer? Over 40x's the word Pray, prayer, prayers or prayed is mentioned from the book of Deuteronomy through Revelation. These verses tell us how to pray and who we should pray for. Prayer opens up the lines of communication to our loving Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When we are struggling with what we want to say the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and gives us the words. Prayer doesn't have to be flowery, long or use big impressive words. Prayer can happen anytime and anywhere. Prayers can be silent or said out loud.

In the book of Job 42:8 in the epilogue after God spoke to Job, he told Job's friends that Job would pray for them and God would listen to Job's prayers and accept them rather than dealing with the folly of these men who offered such "sage" advice. In Psalm 122:6, God asks the people to pray for peace for Jerusalem.

Matthew, chapter 5 vs. 44, Jesus said "to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Jesus not only prayed for those who were persecuting Him, but he asked God to forgive them! Again in Luke 6:28, Jesus said to bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." In 1st

Thessalonians 5:17, it says to “pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances.” I subscribe to the newsletter, “The Voice of the Martyrs” and often when they report on someone who has survived brutal attacks against them and/or their families; they not only forgive their attackers but they pray for them as well!

So why should we pray for everyone even our enemies or those people who have committed such violent acts against others? First of all, Jesus did and we have been asked to do the same by him. It is up to God and not us to deal with them for what they have done. They are the ones who are going to have to face God’s judgement one day the same as we all will. By praying for others, we are Christ’s “ambassadors” for the world. All people whether it is all of us, those we know and those we don’t know are children of God and God wants us to act that way! In Romans 12:21, it says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” What a better way to do that than through prayer!

When something is written in The Bible, such as all the references to prayer, it is written for a reason. It was not only written for all the generations that have come before us but for all of us as well. It is just as relevant today as it was then.

We are asked to pray not only in church but during our own quiet devotional time with God. Let us not disappoint Him but remember to pray for everyone even those and especially those that we shudder to do so for! Amen

Let us pray: Grant us, O Lord, not to mind earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to cleave to those that shall abide; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.
Amen