**September 18, 2022 1 Timothy 2:1-7**

***Prayer***

**Scripture:** *1 Timothy 2:1-7 NRSV*

*(1)First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, (2)for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. (3)This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (4)who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (5)For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, (6)who gave himself a ransom for all--this was attested at the right time. (7)For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

**Notes:**

1. What is prayer? Prayer is simply ***talking*** and ***listening*** to God.
   1. Prayer is a ***two***-***way*** street.
   2. Through prayer, God’s Spirit ***nudges*** you to act.
   3. Then there are four forms of prayer: ***Petitions***, ***prayers***, ***intercessions*** and ***thanksgivings***.
2. Paul is asking us to ***pray*** for all people;
   1. ***Praying*** for others is important.
   2. There are three answers to prayer: ***Yes***, ***No***, and ***Not*** ***Now***.
3. Pray ***boldly*** and ***trust*** that God hears you.
   1. Praying for others is never a ***wasted*** ***effort***.
   2. Your ***willingness*** to walk in prayer with someone you love means more to that person than you will ever know.
   3. Pray for your ***enemies***,
   4. Pray for all officials at every level of ***government***.
   5. Pray that they come to a ***saving*** relationship with Jesus Christ.
4. Pray they will experience the ***wonder*** of God’s love.
   1. the stuff of this world can never make your life ***complete***.
   2. True ***happiness*** and lasting ***peace*** can only be found in knowing the presence of God in your heart.
5. Christ died for the forgiveness of your sins, you are a ***child*** of God,
   1. God will be ***with*** ***you*** to see you through.
   2. Know that others will be praying for ***you***.

**Script:**

I received a video a couple weeks back of my grandson pretending that he was talking on the phone. I loved it and played it over and over again. He would begin with his greeting, then he would ramble for a few seconds, and then he would finish with “Ok, Bye”; and then he would pretend to hang up the phone. Well he was home over the weekend and had found a walkie talkie that made some noise, and wouldn’t you know he pretended to pick up the phone say hello, ramble for a few seconds and then close by saying, “Ok bye.”

We find this to be cute and a bit funny but to my grandson, he was actually talking on the phone. Many times, we find it intimidating to pray; whether it is to pray out loud or pray publicly because we are afraid that others will think. Others may think we have lost our marbles; that we are talking to somebody who is not really there. We are intimidated, then we hide when we pray, if we pray at all.

So by now you have figured that today's sermon is about prayer, and that would be somewhat correct. But what is prayer? And, how do we pray? Prayer is simply talking and listening to God. It’s the essence of faith: believing there is a God who loves you and delights in hearing what you have to say. Prayer is a two-way street. Not only does God listen to your concerns and celebrations, God speaks through the voice of the Spirit. It’s not an audible voice, of course, it’s more like the voice of conscience prompting you to do this, or not do that. Through prayer, God’s Spirit awakens a consciousness, inspires a thought, nudges you to act – or gives you the patience not to act – according to God’s will. Prayer is talking and listening to God.

Then there are the forms of prayer. Paul mentions four forms of prayer: Petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings. The acronym, “Acts.” Can be used to remember them. A-C-T-S – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. Supplication includes praying for yourself as well as praying for others, and that leads to the topic of the day. We find it in Paul’s first letter to Timothy in chapter 2 verses 1-7.

*(1)First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, (2)for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. (3)This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (4)who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (5)For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, (6)who gave himself a ransom for all--this was attested at the right time. (7)For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 1 Timothy 2:1-7 NRSV*

Paul is asking us to pray for all people; and that to me seem like an awful lot. To pray for our loved ones; our families and friends is tough enough, but praying for those we do not know is even harder yet; but to pray for those in power, those who rule over us, well this, borders on impossible. But let’s start at the top and see if we can make some sense of all this.

A friend shares a difficult situation they are in and you tell them you will keep them in your prayers; but the next day you forget all about it. You mean well but you get busy, you become distracted by other situations, or maybe you get carried away by some big news story and the prayer request takes a back seat. Now if you ever look in the back seat of my car you will find all of the things that have taken a back seat and been forgotten.

Do any of you keep a prayer list? It’s a handy way to stay focused and make good on your intentions. It needn’t be elaborate. Some keep their list on an index card, Others keep a list on a tablet. Nowadays, I suppose you could keep a list on your cell phone’s memo app. Whatever works for you, the point is when you say, “I’ll pray for you,” do your best to follow through.

Praying for others is important, and sometimes it can be nothing short of miraculous. A few months ago a friend prayed for another friend who had a heart attack. At the time the prognosis was grim and the friend needed an emergency catheterization but the hospital had no openings. He sought assistance in another facility and they were able to get an appointment the next week. After the procedure the doctor told him that there was no need for further treatment. How can that be, they suffered a severe heart attack two to three weeks earlier and now they need no treatment at all? If I connect the dots, I come to the conclusion that there is a power much stronger than modern medicine at work.

But what about those times when nothing happens, what about the times when your prayers seem to be all for nothing? You pray for a loved one to be healed, but they continue to suffer a slow agonizing death. You pray for a friend to overcome an addiction, but nothing changes; they continue to be drawn into situations where their addiction wins. Or, you pray for a couple to reconcile their differences, but their fighting continues to increase and they end up in divorce.

I cannot explain how God answers some prayers, but not others? I’ve heard it said that there are three answers to prayer: Yes, No, and Not Now. At times there seems to be a direct correlation between what you pray for and what happens. At times it’s as if you’d never prayed at all. And sometimes your prayers are answered years after the fact. However it turns out, I like to think there’s a bigger picture than we know. As Paul said, “*For now, we see in a mirror dimly* …” *(1 Corinthians 13:12)* Some things are beyond our knowing. And, often, it’s in retrospect that we see how our prayers were answered. So, pray boldly and trust that God hears you and will bless those you pray for according to God’s will, in God’s time.

And know this: Praying for others is never a wasted effort. Even when your prayers seem to go unanswered, just your willingness to walk through a difficult time in prayer with someone you love means more to that person than you will ever know.

But Paul would have us go beyond praying for those we love; he tells Timothy to “pray for all men (and women).” Face it: it’s a lot easier to pray for some people than it is for others. It’s easier to pray for the nice old lady down the block, than it is to pray for the grumpy old neighbor next door. It’s easier to pray for the gentleman who helps care for the neighbor’s lawn, than it is to pray for the angry old lady who is always complaining about the kids on their electronic devices. Yet, we are instructed to pray for all of these people the same. Pray for those who rub you the wrong way, but don’t stop there. Pray for your enemies, as well. Remember what Jesus told his disciples, *“…Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*…”(Matthew 5:44)

Pray for your enemies. Pray also for those you don’t even know. That’s actually easier than it sounds. We do it all the time. Take the school shooting in Uvalde Texas and consider the way we have prayed for the victims; or what about the victims of hurricanes, tornados, and other natural disasters; how we have prayed for the war in the Ukraine and the desires to see right prevail and the plight of refugees displaced by the war… you don’t know these people personally, but you pray for them, just the same, “Lord, have mercy.”

Praying for others is one of the hallmarks of Christian love, especially praying for those you don’t know. It links you with others across every possible barrier. You may be of the same culture or speak the same language, but you share a common humanity. Just as Christ died for the sins of the whole world, praying for others over the scope of the whole world brings us that much closer to living as one in Christ.

So, pray for all men and women, whether you know them or not, and, while you’re at it, pray for kings and all who are in high places. Depending on who’s on the throne that can be a bitter pill to swallow. If you did not vote for President Biden and you’re not happy with the upcoming changes, he may not be at the top of your prayer list; but he should be. But what if you voted for him and now the events of the world and the impact of his policies are starting to have an effect on you here in Bedford county; I can understand you not being happy with him, but he needs our prayers, more than ever. Pray for him, anyway.

Pray for the President and all elected officials at every level of government. Follow the admonition of Paul, who told the Romans, “*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.*” *(Romans 13:1)* Trust that God will use the power and influence of elected officials ultimately to accomplish his will. Take Peter’s advice: “*Fear God, honor the Emperor*.” *(1 Peter 2:17)*

There is one more point to make, and it’s the most important point of all: In praying for others, pray that they may come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul states, “… *(God) desires all people to be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth*.” *(1 Timothy 2:1-3)* To come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is to drink from the well-spring of living water that will never run dry.

Remember the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman? Jesus asked for a drink, but the woman turned him down because he was a Jew and she was a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans weren’t supposed to drink from the same cup. That led to a brief exchange, then Jesus said, “*Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life..*” *(John 4:13-14)*

It stands to reason: You’d be the first to pray that a thirsty man, woman or child would be given a cool drink of water. Well, wouldn’t you also want them to discover for themselves the source of that water? You’d be the first to pray for someone who’s hungry to be given bread to eat. Wouldn’t you also want them to taste the bread of heaven? Jesus said, “*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty*.” *(John 6:35)*

In a way, it’s similar to the old proverb: “*If you give a man a fish, he can eat for a day; If you teach a man to fish, he can eat for a lifetime*.” To pray for others to be saved and come into full knowledge of the truth is to pray that they will experience for themselves the wonder of God’s love, that they may feel the strength of God’s Spirit, and they may have the confidence of knowing that God’s grace will be sufficient for their every need.

No matter how you slice it, the tangible stuff of this world can never make your life complete. Your dream home will never be as big or as luxurious as it could be; the ideal job will never be without its headaches; and perfect health won’t last forever. True happiness and lasting peace can only be found in knowing the presence of God in your heart.

Once you know that Christ died for the forgiveness of your sins, that you are a child of God, and that nothing can ever separate you from God’s love, then you can face disaster, disease – even death – with confidence, knowing that your life is in God’s hands and, whatever the future holds, God will be with you to see you through.

So, pray for others … all others. Pray for your friends and family; pray for those you know and those you don’t. Pray for those you like and those who rub you the wrong way; pray for your enemies and those who’d like to do you in. And finally, pray for those in government positions, whether you voted for them or not.

Pray not only that their physical needs will be met; most importantly, pray that they will come to know Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of their lives. And, as you pray for others, know that others will be praying for you.