

**1 Timothy 2:1-8**

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Series C, Proper 20)

**Lessons for the Day: Amos 8:4-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-15; Luke 16:1-15****Don't Just Sit There-Pray!**

September 18, 2022

*“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 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. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle I am telling the truth, I am not lying, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.”*

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

I was always a fan of the Charles Schultz *Peanuts* comic strip. One of my favourites is one where Linus, the philosopher and theologian among the Peanuts gang, makes the observation as he and Charlie Brown are outside one night: “It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness”. Good old Charlie Brown answers with an acknowledgement that while that might be true, there will always be those who disagree. In the final panel, we see Lucy, the consummate critic and complainer, shaking her fist at the night and yelling out, “You stupid darkness!”.

It is easy to grumble and complain about everything that is wrong in this world, in this county, in our families and even in our church. It is harder to do something about it. We can have such high expectations and such grand hopes, but all we do is grumble and complain when those hopes and expectations are not met.

There is a better way; the way that God provides for us. In our text today, Paul tells Timothy: *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”* Paul is saying, “when we want things to happen or when we see things that aren’t all that great around us, the first thing—the very first thing we should do—is pray. This is our way of lighting a candle in the dark, and when we use God’s gift of prayer we see God working because of His grace and mercy to accomplish what we cannot do for ourselves.

We are so blessed that God invites us to come to Him in prayer and to seek His blessing on our labours. James reminds us: ***You do not have, because you do not ask.*** (James 4:2 - ESV) The most important thing we can do to have anything in our lives be the blessing that we want them to be, is to pray. Through prayer we ask our loving Father to grant us His grace and to work for our good. In prayer we ask our Father to bless our world, our nation, our neighbours and all people, even as we pray that He may work through His holy Word to bring lost and dying souls to the glory of His light and truth in Christ.

Yet we are more like Lucy, cursing the darkness. All the things that are happening in our world and in our lives each day should drive us to prayer. Yet prayer often seems to be an after-thought to many people. We fail to make use of one of the greatest gifts that God has given us. We just sang the hymn *What A Friend We Have in Jesus*, saying, *“Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”* (LSB 770, v. 1) Paul understood that truth so well. Again, what is it that Paul says to Timothy? *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.* Paul tells us: “Don’t just sit there. Pray!”

If we want God to bless this land in which we live; if we want His blessings upon our church and its ministry; if we want His help and strength for the needs of our family and friends, we need to take it to the Lord in prayer. Again and again we are given the assurance of God’s listening ear, and His desire to answer the prayers of His people. Jesus tells us: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.* (Matthew 7:7-8 - ESV) God says through the psalmist: *“call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”* (Psalm 50:15, ESV) We miss out on so much help and strength from our loving Father in heaven, simply because we don’t seek His help through prayer.

Have you gotten this message yet? We can look at the things that are happening in this world and moan and whine about them. We can worry and fret about the things that are happening in our life. We can grumble about the things happening—or not

happening—in the church. Or we can do what Paul says, and pray.

The first thing we should do is pray for all people, and he specifically mentions that we pray *for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way*. Like many of you, I am not often enamoured with many of the things our leaders do. They have made some real bone-headed choices, especially when it comes to moral issues that affect the family and the good of society as a whole. But we need to pray for our leaders. With new leaders being chosen by parties at the provincial and federal levels we need to pray that we may elect good leaders. We need to ask the King of Kings, the Lord of all nations to work in the hearts and lives of those who rule to bring forth justice and righteousness in the land. When Paul wrote these words, the emperor Nero was in power. Nero would be a major persecutor of the church. But Paul wanted Christians to pray for Nero. We need to pray for our leaders, too. We don't just sit back and complain. We pray that God would bless the nation and its people with peace.

We also pray for the leaders of the church. I need your prayers as pastor, because I am a fallible, weak, imperfect human being. Without the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit there is nothing I can do to encourage you or support you in your struggles in this world. It is a blessing when our leaders or our elders gather with Pastor Eric and me for a brief prayer before worship. What a blessing it is to have God's people asking Him to bless the preaching of His Word to His glory. When you come into worship on Sunday, don't just sit there waiting for the opening hymn—pray! Pray for the word that will be proclaimed this morning. Pray that your heart and the hearts of all who hear it would be open to God's truth. Pray for our Sunday School teachers and helpers, as they teach the word to our children. Pray for the leaders and workers in our church, for Deaconess Miriam and for all who serve, that they may serve faithfully and joyfully in the Lord, helping us to grow together in the fulness of God's blessings to us.

We also need to pray for those who do not know the forgiveness and life that we have through Jesus Christ. Paul reminds Timothy that God *desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. Jesus didn't come and give His life on the cross only for a small percentage of the population. He didn't centre out the people of Calgary or Didsbury or the people of Canada, or even of North America. Jesus died to pay the terrible price of the sins of every man, woman and child who has lived and whoever will live. Having done that, the resurrected and living Lord wants all people to be saved as they put their trust in Him. Paul reminds us that *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*.

How blessed we are in having the sure and certain hope of life, because Jesus died for us and rose again in that triumph over death and the grave. It is a glorious hope that is meant to be shared. That is why the Lord tells us to *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, (Matthew 28:19 - ESV) If we ever hope to do this, we are going to need help from above. That is why we need to pray and ask God to bless our work. We need to pray, and ask God to keep us faithful to the truth and to be bold in proclaiming that truth. We need to pray that God would confound the works of the devil, so that the message of the cross can be shared to the ends of the earth.

Peter Marshall, the late chaplain of the U.S. Senate, once said in a prayer, "*O Lord, forgive us for thinking that prayer is a waste of time, and help us to see that, without prayer, our work is a waste of time.*" We can see all the things that are happening in the world and throw up our hands in despair and frustration, and then bury our heads in the sand and hope that all the scary things go away. Well, they won't. We can say that the church should reach out to help out the people through the confusion of their life—but the church cannot do that of its own strength. But prayer changes things! Paul says: "*I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.*" If one candle is better than darkness, and one prayer is better than no prayer, how wonderful it is when there are the myriad of prayers from God's faithful people! At the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, God assured Solomon: *if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land*. (2 Chronicles 7:14 - ESV) God will answer in accordance with His wise and perfect plan and purpose. Even when we don't get the answer we want or expect, we go on praying. We pray because our country needs it. We pray because our leaders need our prayers. We pray because our pastor, our church, our friends, our family and everyone around us needs our prayers. We pray boldly and confidently in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us on the cross.

The needs of our world are great. The grace and mercy of Almighty God is greater. Our hopes for our congregation are great. God's desires for us are even greater. Jesus once told His disciples: "*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.*" (Matthew 9:37-38 - ESV) The words that should catch our attention here are *...the harvest is plentiful, so pray*. If we want and even expect God to bless our congregation and its witness to the world then the first thing we should do is pray! We pray, knowing this assurance: "*And my*

***God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*** (Philippians 4:19-20, ESV)