

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 18, 2016
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

1 Timothy 2:1-8

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people-- 2) for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3) This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4) who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5) For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6) who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. 7) And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle--I am telling the truth, I am not lying--and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles. 8) **Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.**

Dear Friends in Christ;

It's 50 days and counting until the day of the 2016 presidential election. The streets of Plymouth have been lined with some rather large campaign signs. It seems my phone is constantly ringing with requests to participate in one political survey after another and the campaign is in full swing. The major candidates have visited our state and I'm guessing that one or the other of them might just stop in one more time. Are you growing a bit tired of it all – it seems like it's been going on for so long – and there's been so much negativity at times. It's easy to forget that all governments are a gift from God and that our leaders are in need of our prayers so that they might be given the ability to govern wisely and in keeping with God's will.

Our text for today is really a section dealing with worship in the Christian congregation. Most often we when think about talking with God we use the word prayer but our text identifies a variety of ways in which we can talk to God. We can approach God with our needs and request his assistance. Of course, God already knows those needs just as a parent knows the needs of their children. Yet the children often bring their requests to their parents as a way of showing that they know that the parents are the ones who will take care of them. Our requests of God are a way of acknowledging him as the source of our gifts and the supplier of our needs.

We speak to God in a reverent and worshipful manner which Paul simply calls prayer in our text. In our prayers, we will express our confidence that our heavenly Father will go into action in response to our intercessions. Of course, there is always room for expressing our gratitude to God with our thanksgiving.

It's interesting to me that when Paul gives instructions regarding prayer that he explains not what we are to pray for but whom we are to pray for. While we often pray for things, our text reminds us of the importance of praying for people! It does not limit the people for whom we are to pray. It tells us to pray for everyone – the sick and the suffering our congregation, the new born and the dying, our missionaries and the people they serve, those experiencing famine or suffering from disease in Africa, those who are oppressed by dictators or whose countries are ravaged by war, for fellow Christians who live under the threat of persecution, for billions around the world who do not know the peace of Christ and are without hope and without God, for friend and foe alike -- obviously we will never run out of people to pray for so where should we begin? In our text Paul tells us to begin by

Theme: Lifting Up Your Hands in Prayer for Those in Authority

1. So that we may live Christian lives
2. So that we may know and enjoy God's Truth
3. So That we may share God's Truth

It seems most likely that the kings and the authorities Paul had in mind would have been the government of Rome headed by Nero who was known among other things for his persecution of Christians. Paul himself most likely was killed as a martyr under his rule.

We are reminded then that those who have been allowed to rule by God -- whether they are the president of our nation, the mayor of our city -- whether they are good or evil -- they are in need of our prayers and that would be especially true of those who might seek to hinder the work of the church.

The Bible reminds us that **the authorities that exist have been established by God** (Romans 13:1 NIV) and **the one in authority is God's servant for your good.** (Romans 13:4 NIV) We pray for these leaders **so that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.** What a blessing it is that we can assemble, worship and proclaim the saving gospel unhindered by strict regulations or the threat of terrorism and war. A simple reading of the world news section of a newspaper or a simple viewing of the world news reminds us that we dare not take such blessings for granted.

What does Paul have in mind when is talking about living **peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness?** This is more than just enjoying an untroubled, comfortable life style. It is our desire to live in reverence toward God and with God pleasing attitudes toward our fellowman. We are encouraged to pray that we will be allowed to live Christian lives that reflect our gratitude to God. Such lives will enable us to know and enjoy God's truth and to share God's truth with all people.

The first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer remind us of what it means to live Christian lives. We pray,

- *Hallowed be thy name* – enable us to keep your name holy as we teach and live according to your word of truth.
- *Thy kingdom come* – Lord bless your word so that through it we and many others will enjoy peace and forgiveness in your everlasting kingdom.
- *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven* – may we with your strength be able to live according to your word and spread that word to others even as you defeat and conquer everything that opposes your good and gracious will.

Such prayers are good and pleasing to **God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**

God has graciously provided us with a government that, in principal, still allows us to enjoy religious freedom. We have been given the right to seek the truth of God and to enjoy the blessings of that truth. Paul can't help but mention the central feature of the truth of God. **There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6) who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.**

We have been blessed with the knowledge that there is only one true God and that there is only one way to enjoy peace with him. This one God wanted all to be saved and so he provided a mediator – one who would establish peace between himself and us. Jesus Christ is the one who brought us back to God when sin separated us from the only God there is.

He became one of us – sharing in our humanity so that he could destroy devil and set us free from his grasp. But since no man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him (Psalm 49:7) Christ Jesus needed to more than a mere man – he was God himself – he was without blemish or sin. When he took our

place under the curse of God and died, his holiness was transferred to our account. He gave himself for all men as a testimony of God's love and forgiveness for all!

We live Christian lives because we are able to know and enjoy the Truth of God. Part of living those Christian lives is sharing God's truth with others.

Let us continue to Lift Up our Hands in Prayer for Those in Authority

1. So that we may live Christian lives
2. So that we may know and enjoy God's Truth
3. So That we may share God's Truth

Christ gave himself for all – every man, woman and child who has lived, is living or will live on this earth. He gave himself for every person you know, your spouse, your children, your family, your friends, your co-workers, your business partners, your boss or manager, any one who you enjoy visiting with or being with. When we begin to put faces on "the all" for whom Christ offered his life for then our prayers will become more urgent and meaningful. We pray that everyone may hear about the Savior and come to him who gave his life for them because whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Paul eagerly prayed for all and he just as eagerly carried out his appointment and calling as a messenger of the truth to the Gentiles. As we pray for all people and that all will come to a knowledge of the saving truth it's important for us to keep in mind that God will use us to accomplish his saving purpose in the world.

In Matthew 9 Jesus said to his disciples, "**The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.**" (37-38) In the very next chapter we read how Jesus sent out the twelve to bring in the harvest – **As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'** (Matthew 10:7)

Just as Paul was aware of the fact that he had been called to proclaim the message of God's grace with the Gentiles so we pray that God will use us to carry out the assignment he gave us **to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.** (Mark 16:15)

Truly, it is easier for us to carry out this great commission when we have been blessed with the gift of good government as an answer to our prayers. We have been given the gift of freedom of speech – a gift that allows us to pray to God everywhere and to talk about the Savior anywhere. Those freedoms are not enjoyed by every Christian. Try to imagine for a moment what it must be like to live in a country where it is illegal to speak to anyone about Christ unless they ask you about him first. You couldn't refrain from sharing the message of Jesus because without Jesus those whom you love would be lost. And so you would pray fervently that you'd be given opportunities to share the gospel and you'd also pray for the gift a government that would allow you to speak more openly about Jesus.

Although that is not the way it is in our country that's the way it is for many in this world so as an exercise of our God-given freedoms let us pray for those who are oppressed and let us freely speak with others about our faith.

Another way that the gift of good government will enable us to share the gospel is by providing us with a stable economy that enables us to use our financial resources to support the spread of the gospel and the sending of missionaries and the training of workers in the Lord's kingdom.

So whether we are considering our personal mission efforts or the efforts of others that work on our behalf good government will be a blessing we will pray for.

This election season as you see the many political ads – may they serve to remind you of God’s gift of government. And don’t forget to join together with your brothers and sisters in Christ **to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.**

The hands extended to God in prayer, or folded as is our custom, are to be holy hands. Only the one who has clean hands and a pure heart can stand before God. Who can claim to have clean hands and a pure heart before the Lord? It is only those who come to the Lord in repentance, confessing their sins, and trusting in the Lord for cleansing. Confident of our forgiveness we’ll use our hands not only in prayer but in service to our Savior God as an expression of our faith in a spirit of love and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

May God enable all of us to enjoy his gift of good government as we live Christian lives, as we know and enjoy the truth and as we share the truth with others. Let us continue to Lift Up our Hands in Prayer for Those in Authority giving thanks for these blessings and asking that they would continue for us. Amen.