



Grace Lutheran Church
Valentine, NE

MAIL MINISTRY

The 5th Sunday after Easter
May 6, 2018

Pre-Service Meditation: Psalm 96

Hymns: 195:1-2, 4; 578; 577

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 55:6-11
Luke 11:5-13

Topics: Citizenship; Evangelism; Prayer

In the Name of Jesus!

Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-6

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

In Christ Jesus, who urges us to remember our neighbors' greatest needs, dear fellow redeemed:

This past Thursday was our National Day of Prayer. The National Day of Prayer was established under President Harry Truman in 1952 through a joint-declaration of Congress. Later under President Ronald Reagan, the first Thursday in May was designated as our annual National Day of Prayer. The day's purpose is to acknowledge the role of God in blessing our country and to ask our citizens to pray to God on behalf of our country. During my twenty-one years as pastor of Immanuel congregation in Mankato, I was privileged each year to lead a service of readings, prayers, and hymns on the National Day of Prayer. In those services I would remind those in attendance, that we ought not limit our prayers for our country and its leaders to a single day, but that we rather should pray for them regularly. Our text for this morning affirms that thought, when it exhorts us to pray *"for kings and all who are in authority."* Our prayers for our country and its leaders are important, for as the Bible clearly states: *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."* (James 5:16b NIV)

With our state primary elections coming in just over a week, our thoughts again naturally turn to politics and the welfare of our state and nation. As Christians we will want to be concerned citizens, taking an interest in society around us and doing all that we can to be a blessing to others. How are we to show that interest, and how do we become that blessing to our neighbors? In reality there are many ways to do both things. We will certainly want to vote, but that in reality only occurs several times every year or two. We act as concerned citizens each day, however, when we lead honest and productive lives; when we keep informed on the issues confronting our communities, state, and nation; when we volunteer our time to help with charities; and when we strive to build stable and loving homes. In all these ways and many others, we fulfill our Savior's will by loving our neighbors as ourselves (cf. Matthew 22:39).

In our text the apostle Paul speaks of two things that we can do on a regular basis to help meet our neighbor's greatest needs. Let us listen to **PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO CONCERNED CITIZENS**. What does Paul urge us to do? He urges us, first of all, to **pray for all people!** He urges us, secondly, to **proclaim Christ to all people!**

I.

Paul's 1st Epistle to Timothy is filled with general instructions for Timothy, a young pastor, and for the members of his congregations. He says in the opening verses of our text: *"I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."*

Dear friends—dear fellow concerned Christian citizens, Paul here urges us to pray for all

people, but especially for those who govern us. That is an important thought, but how often do we actually do this? How often do we pray for people other than ourselves, the members of our immediate families, and our friends? Have we prayed for the families who lost loved ones in the school shooting in Florida some months ago? Have we prayed for the families of those victims in Montreal, who were mowed down by a man driving a van just two weeks ago? Do we remember to pray for the Christians in Nigeria suffering attacks by Boko Haram, or the people of all faiths in Afghanistan who are constantly in danger of attack by the Taliban? I must confess for myself that while these people, who are included in Paul's reference to "*all men*," enter my thoughts from time to time when I read about them in *World* magazine or hear about them on the radio, I very seldom find myself praying for them. How about you? May God forgive our sins of omission in this area!

Paul mentions in particular "*kings and all who are in authority*," stating that we should take special care to keep them in our prayers. His goal ultimately is the blessing of everyone in society, so that with the blessing of the Lord we might "*lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence*." While we do not have a king, we certainly have a President and Vice-President. We have Senators and Representatives, Supreme Court Justices, and other magistrates. We have governors, mayors, and city council members. We have police and fire personnel. We have county administrators and city workers. Do we pray for them, as often as we complain about them? Are we all too quick to criticize our public officials and workers when things go wrong, but ever so slow to intercede with God on their behalf so that things might go right? I believe that I fail all too often properly to support those authorities with my prayers. How about you? Could it be that our society is not as "*quiet and peaceable*" as it might be because we have not taken all of these matters to our Lord in prayer? Could it be that we "*have not, because we do not ask*?" (James 4:2) May God forgive our failures to faithfully uphold in prayer those whom we have chosen to serve our public interest!

My dear friends, while we must with sorrow confess our many sins of omission in this area, we can be uplifted by the knowledge that God forgives all our failures. He sent His Son Jesus to die for all sins and has promised to cleanse us of all sins as we indeed confess them (cf. 1 John 1:9). Let us, however, determine from this moment forward to take the time and make the effort to pray for our public officials. Surely our President needs our prayers, whether you and I personally support or oppose his policies. Pray that the Lord might give him and his advisors wisdom as they carry out their duties. Let us pray for all of this year's candidates, that the Lord would grant them honesty and integrity, that the Lord would move them to have as their highest goal service to our country and its citizens. Let us remember the members of our Armed Services, who are placing themselves at risk in order to preserve for us that "*quiet and peaceable life*" Paul mentions in our text. Let us remember their families as well and pray that the Lord might comfort them in the midst of their separation. Our Savior promises: "*Ask, and it will be given to you*." (Matthew 7:7) Let us take our Savior at His word. Let us listen to **PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO CONCERNED CHRISTIAN CITIZENS** and **pray for all people!**

II.

Let us also **proclaim Christ to all people!** The apostle writes: "*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*." As we pray for all people, may we remember to pray for their souls' salvation. God loved the world and sent His Son to die in order to remove the sins of the world (cf. John 3:16). Jesus' death, however, does not guarantee that all people will be saved, for the blessings of Jesus' redemptive work are received only as people are led by the Spirit to place their faith in Jesus as their Savior. The Scriptures tell us, after all, "*faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God*." (Romans 10:17) Let us pray that all people "*come to the knowledge of the truth*" as we share it with them!

Since 9/11 we have been in the midst of a war on terror. Those promoting terror in our world today are for the most part members of extremist Muslim sects. While these terrorists are our nation's enemies, and we must be prepared to defend our country from them, let us always remember Jesus' words: "*Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*." (Matthew 5:44) How often do we

pray for the conversion of Muslims in general, and of Muslim terrorists in particular? Yet that is the task our Savior places before us and demonstrated Himself while on the cross. He died for a world, which rejected Him, yet He prayed for that world as the nails were driven through His hands and feet: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”* (Luke 23:34) Jesus was crying out at that point not only for His Father to forgive the Roman soldiers involved in His crucifixion, but also for us and for all others including radical Muslims, for we are all collectively responsible for His death by virtue of our sins. It is interesting to note that since the rise of Islamic terrorism, more Muslims have been led to faith in Jesus than ever before in history. There are many Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere, who are praying for such conversions and who are sharing God’s Word resulting in such conversions.

Therefore, let us defend our country from our enemies, but let us also as the Lord gives us opportunity proclaim Christ to those enemies. Jesus Christ, not Muhammed, is the *“one Mediator between God and man.”* Jesus is *“the Word”* through which God has spoken to us in these New Testament times (cf. John 1:1-4; Hebrews 1:2) Let us remind everyone how by nature they are prisoners of Satan in view of their sin, but that Jesus Christ has freed them through His blood and thereby reconciled them to God.

Paul says that this gospel message is *“to be testified in due time.”* That *“due time”* was then, and the apostle Paul proclaimed Christ throughout the Roman Empire. That *“due time”* is now and we are to proclaim Christ here in Valentine, Mission, and White River, throughout our United States, and then throughout the world as the Lord gives us opportunity. We do not know how much time is left for this world of ours, but we do know that this world will come to an end. We do know that God has commissioned us to be His witnesses and to proclaim the gospel to every creature, and that it is through such witnessing that souls are led to faith in Jesus and so saved (cf. Acts 1:9; Mark 16:15).

This we can do right here in Valentine, Mission, and White River. Parents can have devotions with their children and so instruct them in God’s truths preparing them for lives of faithful Christian service. Neighbors can testify to neighbors both through their encouraging words and their loving actions. Invitations to church can be extended. Sermons or other spiritual materials can be shared. Delegate conferences and conventions can be attended, so that the broader work of our church can be accomplished. Contributions for the work of missions can be collected. In four weeks, Grace will hold its Vacation Bible School. We have volunteers coming from White River and Mankato to help us, but there are ways in which we can all participate to help share with the children of the Valentine community and the surrounding area the love of God seen in Christ.

How do all of these things relate to being concerned Christian citizens? There is no better way to promote the welfare of our country than by sharing our faith and leading others to Christ. The Bible tells us, after all: *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD!”* (Psalm 33:12) Hearts that have been won by the love of Christ will love in turn, serve others, and sacrifice their own desires for the public welfare. May we then be led to be good citizens every day and in every way, but especially by praying for our fellow citizens and proclaiming to them the precious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

--Pastor Paul D. Nolting
To God alone be glory!

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