

Come before the King! 1 Timothy 2:1-8
4th Sunday of End Times - Christ the King 11/21/04 Pastor Jon Bergemann

May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you. Amen. The Word of God for our consideration this morning is from 1 Timothy 2:1-8. (read text) In the name of Jesus, who opened the Kingdom of heaven to us.

Our nation will have the inauguration of a President coming up soon. And while each Presidential inauguration is memorable in our nation's history, one that often comes to mind is President Jimmy Carter's in 1977. What made the inauguration a bit unique? Well, instead of riding in a car or carriage to the White House, he walked down the street with his wife. His point? He wanted to show that he was a President of the people. That he was not inaccessible. Of course, in reality, had anyone tried to run into the street to shake his hand - they would have been swiftly taken care of by secret service agents. And, in reality, he will continue to be protected by agents until he dies. Presidents are elected by the people, promise to be for the people, but, in reality, aren't necessarily all that accessible to the people, are they?

For instance, imagine that you tried to walk into the White House to chat with President Bush about how things were going. How far do you think you'd get? Probably not far. There would be security guards, armed secret service men, hidden alarms, and security cameras which would stop you before you ever got near to the President.

I'd imagine that we might have difficulty getting an audience with presidents or other powerful world leaders. But what about the most powerful ruler in all creation? What about God Himself? Do we have difficulty getting an audience with Him? This morning we see that we can come before the King of creation, God himself, with confidence. We can boldly come up to the One who far surpasses any earthly Presidents and Kings. We have his attention any time we want, and we can tell him anything. We have this audience through prayer.

So how are we to use this great resource?

In the first verse of our text, Paul urges us to pray for "everyone - for kings and all those in authority." Who is that we are to pray for? Everyone. For our friends, family, loved ones? Yep. For our coworkers? Yep. For our classmates? Yep. For the guy who cuts you off on the way home? Yep. For the cop who pulls you over on the way home? Yep. For our boss? Yep. For our leaders? Yep. Paul urges us to pray for everyone, even those in authority. He urges us to use our resource of prayer unselfishly, as our King wants us to. Have we?

And why should we pray for these people? Paul says so that "we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." And why is this important? Paul goes on to say that it pleases God, "who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." The goal of our prayers for peace should be for optimal conditions to spread the Gospel. When we have a peaceful society, we can go and invite people to church or Sunday School, we can tell others about Jesus. We can bring people to a knowledge of the truth. But is this always our primary thought when we pray for peace? Do we see peaceful conditions as the key to spreading the Gospel? Or do we ask for peace simply because it is something we like? Something that makes our lives more pleasant. Something much better than being bothered by war. Do we pray for peace because it makes our earthly lives better, or because it provides the opportunity to make eternal lives better?

Unfortunately, we'd have to admit that we always haven't used prayer as our King desires. We haven't always prayed for those we should, and we haven't always prayed for the right reasons. Too often we use our resources, whether prayer, or time, or material possessions, for us. Too often it just doesn't seem to make sense to us to pray for those who persecute us, to give to those who don't give back. So often we forget that the ultimate goal of using our resources is to spread God's Word, not to make our lives comfortable. At times, we can be selfish subjects of our Heavenly King. This is not how He wants us to act. This is rebellion.

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We have rebelled. And what do those who rebel against a king deserve? Death. But the amazing thing is, that's not what we get. Indeed, the price of our rebellion has been paid for.

As we look at the words of verse 6 in our text, we hear that Christ Jesus "gave himself as a ransom for all men." Our rebellion put us in the power of sin and the devil. A ransom, a price, had to be paid to set us free. And it was! Jesus gave his own life as a ransom, as payment for our sins.

Look at this love! Jesus paid the ultimate price to set us free! I'm not sure what you and I would be willing to do for another. Maybe in extreme circumstances we'd give our life for our child. But how about for an enemy? Would we give our lives for someone who hated us? Who ignored us? Or who sinned against us time and time again? Probably not.

But now look what Jesus did for us. He gave His life as a ransom for his enemies. He gave his life for those who beat him, and crucified him. He gave his life for those who sinned against him and rebelled against his rule. He gave his life for you and me. Wow! What a price of love he paid for us!

And what a change this price has caused. Because Jesus died and rose for us, he has changed how we stand. We now stand before the King as His perfect subjects. When God looks at us, he doesn't see rebelling runts who resist His rule. No. He sees perfect subjects, His own perfect children. He sees that Jesus' ransom has freed us from sin and made us perfect in His sight. Because of this, the Almighty of the Universe looks at us and says, "You look perfect."

And so we can come before the King in complete confidence. We are his precious, forgiven, loved people, so we can stand before God because our ransom has been paid. But what are we to do as we stand before Him? Bow our heads in reverence and keep quiet?

Think again about trying to get in to see the President. Imagine that somehow you did get to talk to him. What would you say? You'd probably pick your words wisely. You probably wouldn't joke around too much. You'd probably be rather quiet and wait to speak until spoken to. Especially as you saw a room full of large and armed secret service men, listening to your every word. You'd choose your words carefully.

So now, in prayer, we stand before the Ruler of creation, the holy God. Amazingly, we can stand before God and speak. But what do we say? How do we speak before such greatness? Should we hesitantly pick our words with extreme care, as if we were before our boss or the President? No. We can talk to God not only with full confidence, but with free communication.

So is this what we do? Do we share with God our every thought and problem, our every hope and joy? Do we freely communicate with Him about everything in our lives? Or do we sometimes stand silent before him, not realizing the great gift we have in prayer?

Indeed, how often we underestimate the power and privilege of prayer! How often we fail to realize that we can tell everything to God anytime we want to! What a great and powerful gift this free communication, this prayer with our God, really is! It is not a last ditch effort for life's problems. It's not a nervous act before a stern ruler. It is free communication with the One who loves us more than anyone on this earth.

Realize that this free communication means that we can talk to Him about everything. As Paul urges in the first verse of our lesson, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone." Look at what he's telling us we can take to God: requests, prayers, intercession, thanksgiving. Everything!

What would you talk to your boss about? Your every worry, your every fear, your every shortcoming, your every hope and dream? Of course not. And why not? Because he probably wouldn't want to hear about them, and you wouldn't be sure what he'd think of you if you did talk to him about all those things.

But that's not the way it is with the God who stands over all earthly authority. No, before this God we can pour out our every thought, wish, hope, fear, and dream. He wants to hear. Did you have a bad day at work? He wants to hear. Do you have fears or concerns about the future? He wants to hear. Do you struggle with temptation? He wants to hear. Are

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you in love? He wants to hear. Did you get dumped? He wants to hear. Do you have goals and dreams? He wants to hear. Do you marvel at His love for you? He wants to hear. Yes, God himself, the Power of powers, the King of kings and Lord of lords, wants to wrap you in his arms and hear your every thought, wish, hope, fear, and dream.

And He not only has the desire to hear, but He has the power to answer. Can the One who rules over all things calm your fears? Yes. Can He heal your broken heart? Yes. Can He protect you from harm? Yes. Can He shield you, and love you, and take you to be with him in heaven? Yes. And He will. He will listen. He will love. He will forgive. He will save. He will rule over all for you, his perfect, priceless child. And He will take you to the kingdom He has waiting for you in heaven.

It's true that we might not be able to get an audience with the President. But that doesn't matter. We've been invited to confidently come before our God in heaven any time we want, free of fear. He's eagerly waiting to hear what we have to say. So go ahead and talk to Him. He's listening. Anytime, day or night, anywhere. His throne is always open to you. Amen.