

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Pray Every Way You Know How

I do not have to tell you that we live in tumultuous times. World events have us shaking our heads and maybe even shaking in our boots. There seems to be little middle ground for any conversations whether they be around politics, education, health care, environmental issues, science or religious views. There are wars, upheavals of entire groups of people, natural disasters, assassinations, threats of worker strikes, and fear of governments that seems to be moving from democracies to other forms of governance.

Throughout the world there are challenges that accompany the displacement of people, influx of refugees, changing cultures because of the diversity that everyone around the world is experiencing, and homelessness. It all seems too much.

Closer to home and as today in worship at St. Andrew's we celebrate with our children and teachers a blessing of back packs, we think of children and teachers, students and professors headed back into the school or academic year and there are a lot of pressures. Even for support staff things and situations can be filled with joy and tension. For all teachers and staff there are the demands made of time and energy and they desire to be doing the best for the students. Here in Thunder Bay, we have seen the strike action at the college and in Alberta teachers are looking at possible strike action on October 6th should negotiations with the government fail.

Then there are the children. Their worlds may not know the extent to which people around them are finding things challenging, but the children also come with their own concerns. For some they come from families that can afford little to no extras. They may be arriving at school with an empty stomach and no lunch. Some children have a hard time fitting in and others have a hard time learning to care about those who are more vulnerable. There are many things to juggle as they learn about themselves and about how their actions impact those around them.

So, what is one to do?

Well, if we look to this first letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy we can find wisdom. It may be helpful to know that Timothy was one who worked closely with Paul, and when they were apart Timothy was trusted with much leadership of the followers of Christ that he would find himself spending time with. Paul also viewed Timothy as a beloved son. This letter is one of instruction meant to help Timothy provide leadership.

I will say that if one were to read all of the letter there would be much to unpack as there are some difficult passages that grate against our current understandings, including the fact that I am a woman in a pulpit, but those conversations are for another time. Today

we are looking at this particular passage from chapter two and it starts with “The first thing I want you to do is pray.” “The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know.”¹

Now if that wasn’t a tall order. For starters, most of us feel like doers rather than prayers so we want to get things done. And I would suggest that it may be part of our challenge in the world, because if we continue with this passage, we see that Paul has more to say. “Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live.” This is Paul’s hope for the Christian community.

Going back to the beginning where I spoke about the many challenges our world is facing, these words are as important now as they were when they were written. We often think that we are living in some of the worst of times, but in Paul’s time Christians were being persecuted, they did not live in safety, they were scattered and government did not look at all like a democracy. Paul wouldn’t have even understood what a democracy was. But in our time, as it was in Paul’s, there are always rulers and governments to rule, so we pray for them.

We are also called to pray for all people and that all people would come to know God and Jesus. When reading this kind of writing we have to remember that Paul was writing to a follower of Christ, Timothy, who was leading a group of people who were trying their best to follow in the way they understood Christ and God would have them live. It was about the hope that all people could know and experience the transforming love of Christ.

So, when you hear, “[God] wants not only us but *everyone* saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth *we’ve* learned: that there’s one God and only one, and one Priest-Mediator between God and us—Jesus, who offered himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free.”, you have to hear it in the context of Christian community. It is not about forcing anyone to believe, but rather presenting the Good News of God’s work in and through Christ to all people so that they too may choose to experience God’s love, forgiveness, and grace.

As Paul continues to talk about his own life he writes, “Eventually the news is going to get out. This and this only has been my appointed work: getting this news to those who have never heard of God, and explaining how it works by simple faith and plain truth.” This is our appointed work as well. Letting people know about the God who loves them.

For all the ways that the Christian faith has been used to justify wars and the harm it has caused to people, that was never the intention. Using the Christian faith as a weapon is so far from what Jesus intended. Jesus’ message was about love. It was a

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture references come from [The Message](#) (MSG). Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

message of hope and care for the most vulnerable in our midst and in the world. It was and is the desire that we come to have the knowledge that we are loved and valuable in God's sight. And that message is for everyone, not just the ones we think get it, or are worthy of it. This is about God not about our indictments or judgments.

Our first work is to pray, to pray for leaders and governments, and to pray for all people. Prayer is not our only work. We are also to live lives that bear witness to God's love and concern not just for some but for everyone. Prayer is a powerful thing, which is why I think Paul says, "first of all" ...first of all pray. Prayer puts God into the equation, not for God's sake but for our own. Prayer opens our hearts to forgiveness and love. It becomes more difficult to hate those we hold in prayers that speak of hope, desire for the best outcomes for all involved, forgiveness, and care.

Whatever you face today and, in the days to come, the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, possibilities and challenges...pray. Pray for leaders, governments, the world and its people. Pray for the communities of faith that try to live out God's will in the best ways they know how. Pray for family and friends, and pray for yourself. Pray with the knowledge of God's love and concern for everyone, then be at peace. Work toward the good of all, and knowing that you may not see the fruit of your labours, be at peace. Go in peace. God in love. Go in faith. Amen