**1 Timothy 2:1-7**

**Pray for God’s Wants**

God our Father, Jesus our Savior, Holy Spirit our sanctifier, we come before you this morning in thanks, praise, humility, and adoration. We thank you for the opportunity to worship your holy name. We thank you for the building you have given us. We thank you for the people who made it safely to worship this morning. We ask that you watch over those who weren’t able to join us this morning. We pray that you would bless our time together in your Word so that we may grow in our faith and relationship with you. We ask that you would make us wise for salvation and eager to share that salvation with everyone we meet. Give us opportunities to spread the gospel message of Jesus Christ crucified with the world around us. Continue to preserve your creation and your people. Do so through the safety of our government. Bless all those who work to grow and produce our food. Bless those who provide all the services that make daily living easier for us. Lord, we ask that you would hear this and all our prayers. Amen. Do you know what makes this a powerful prayer? It’s not because I’m a pastor. It’s not because I wrote it or spoke it. It’s not because it took almost two minutes to read. The reason this prayer is powerful is because of the ears on which it falls. Prayer is powerful because God listens to prayer and answers it. God is the one who makes my prayers powerful, God is the one who makes your prayers powerful.

When someone asks me to pray for something, I write it down and I work through those prayers during the week. But what happens when life is coasting and there’s nothing terrible happening. What happens when there’s nothing crazy good happening. What happens when life is so busy, you’re going back and forth from school and work and the grocery store, and you thought along the way, “I could really pray about that,” and then you get home and the prayer brainstorming goes straight out the window because you come home to a mess, or screaming kids, or your head hits the pillow right away. Prayer is kinda one of those things that you do when you have time and you have something specific to pray about. Paul gives us something that will never leave us with nothing to pray about. When you leave today, you will never again be able to say, I don’t have anything to pray for. You wanna know why? Because he’s giving us 8.2 billion reasons to pray. Why? Why does God want you to pray for President Trump even if you didn’t vote for him? Why would God want you to pray for the individuals who authorize each missile to be launched between Israel and Iran? Why would God want you to pray for terrorists who strike fear into so many hearts around the world? Why would God say pray for the person who flipped you off, or hit your mailbox and kept driving, or the neighbor who’s never got anything good to say? If you took some time to think about all the reasons not to pray for other people, you’d think Paul might be crossing the line.

**I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,for kings and all those who are in authority, in order that we might live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** God wants you to come to him in prayer about everything, good, bad, devastating, or exciting. Call upon your God. If we’re honest with ourselves, we’re not very good at prayer. It’s tempting to get caught up in myself or my people when I go to God in prayer. Lord, make this an easy day at work. Lord, take the cancer away. Lord, help me pass the exam for my degree. Lord, you say you listen, hear me now. And that’s a proper use of prayer. Lean on your God! In the gospel we read this morning, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. We use that prayer every time we worship. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Pause. It’s no coincidence that those two phrases are back to back: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Let me explain those: Thy kingdom come. We’re not just talking about the kingdom of heaven. We’re talking about where our king, our God, rules. Where does God want to rule? Our hearts. He wants to rule in your heart, my heart, the president’s heart, and every terrorist’s heart. That’s what we say when we pray thy kingdom come. When we follow it up with, thy will be done, we’re acknowledging what Paul says, God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. We see that God wants to rule in everyone’s heart and then we say, make it happen God!

THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD. Pray for all people. Pray for your needs. Pray for your family’s needs. Pray for your government. Pray for your enemies. Pray for the bullies. Pray for the people you never want to talk to or see again. Because every single one of them is on God’s list of desirables. God wants them all. And he clearly proved that desire by paying the ransom price tagged on every single one of us; a price that could only be paid in blood; a price that could only be paid by his Son. **There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.** You see it happen in the garden of gethsemane. **Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.** Jesus knew. Jesus knew what it was going to take for God’s will to be done. Jesus knew the God to whom he prayed and the power of the prayer because of him. And that’s what happened as the Savior of the world marched up to that cross. All people were saved. There’s not a person, not 1 of those 8.2 billion people, who was not saved by Jesus’ death and resurrection. So, pray for what God wants. Pray that those people, for whom Jesus died, learn about what their Savior did for them.

I want to challenge you this morning to grow in your prayer life. And there are a number of ways that can happen. Have you ever noticed that before the food enters our mouths, we first utter prayers of thanksgiving. The food to the mouth is almost like a prayer trigger. Out pops, “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest and let these gifts to us be blessed.” The same thing happens during our wake up or bedtime routines. “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray to the Lord my soul to keep.” Have you noticed that? When you hear that someone made it out of the crash unharmed, “Thank you, Jesus!” We have triggers. One option for growth in prayer would be to find a new trigger. Maybe, it’s when you shut the door to your car, before the car turns on, you ask God to get you to point B safely. Maybe, it’s when you hit the garage door button, you pray that, whether it’s complete chaos or a tranquil paradise in your house, that God will use you to love and serve your family when you walk through that door. Maybe, when you’re heading to a social event, you ask God for an opportunity to tell someone about Jesus and the courage to do so.

Prayer is a part of your Christian life, your sanctified living, and it takes great intention. It takes focus, and practice. You could practice a method called soap. SOAP. Scripture, observation, application, prayer. You read something God has to say, you acknowledge what he says, you make an application, and you pray that God’s will be done. You could keep a running list of people and prayer requests that they make and then work through those prayers regularly. That’s part of my prayer practice as your pastor. Maybe you pray in the form of a journal, where you put pen to paper as you make your requests and give thanks to your God. Maybe, when you need a break from work, instead of picking up the phone and scrolling, you instead take a walk and have a conversation with God about how the day’s been going, and what requests you have for him. I think too often, we get caught up in the worry of not knowing what to pray, or how to pray, or who to pray for, that we can get overwhelmed and just don’t pray at all. Or maybe we think that our request is too big or too small for God to handle. Or, maybe we think it looks foolish to other people. Maybe, even though you believe in Jesus as your Savior, you’re skeptical that he hears and answers those prayers. Remember back to the prayer we began with: prayer isn’t effective or powerful because of the person praying. Prayer is effective and powerful because of the God who is listening.

When we pray in just a few minutes, I want you to give your attention to the words you hear and the responses you speak. Hear the grace of your God as you see his love and provision witnessed in the words of other believers. That’s a beautiful part of our fellowship in prayer, we get to remind each other of the promises God makes to us and the salvation he wants for us. As we pray the Lord’s Prayer and address our heavenly Father, recognize that he wants to hear our voices, he loves to hear our voices, and he always listens to our voices. There’s not a prayer you speak that your God doesn’t hear. There’s not a prayer you speak that God doesn’t answer. Pray for the things God wants and you will see that the will of your gracious God is always done. Amen.