

Sermon on 1. Timothy 2: *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

When I was learning Greek at the University in Pretoria – together with Pastor Hiester mann many years ago – some students in our class would ask, if they could pray. If they could pray for us so that our tests would go well. After a few times, the Greek Professor, who had a great sense of humour, said to them, „Julle moet minder bid en meer leer!“ You should pray a bit less, and study a bit more... Now on the one hand the Prof. was right. Being a Christian and praying, does not exclude us from working hard, studying and being active in life, doing good things.

But, the students were also onto something. St. Paul admonishes St. Timothy, the Ephesians and also us, before all things to pray. When we pray, we take up a stance, a mindset, an attitude that is characteristically Christian. Why? Because when we pray we look to God our Father, thanking and praising him for what he has done for us. Praying, we are, like Moses in our Old Testament reading (Ex. 43, 7-14), reminding God, expecting of Him, that which He has promised us. Sometimes we even just pray to express our bewilderment at that which God is putting us through. Prayer is a very basic expression of our faith.

St. Paul goes on. He turns our prayers not only towards God, but towards all people. All people. Paul emphasises this. He uses the word „all“ six times in our reading. Four times the expression “for all“. Paul is trying to tell Timothy, the Ephesians - and us - something. While we might also pray for ourselves, our bank-balance, our family, friends, tribe, rugby team etc. we should before all things pray and - even thank him - for all people, especially those in positions of leadership and responsibility. Because God uses them. He uses them to maintain the peace, quiet, dignity and fear of God we need, when we live out our vocations. Our vocations as children, farmers, software-engineers, doctors, spouses, teachers, businesspeople, parents, pastors, salesmen, lawyers, soldiers, chiropractors or wherever God has put you. Just like the Israelites needed the prayer of Moses, these people need your prayer, especially when they are struggling with their very high office. With our President we are blessed in this way. He supplies us with many obvious things we can pray for. We

don't even have to speculate very long before we can start praying.

Prayer is a great gift for us, and a good tool against our old Adam – or Eve. Because when I pray for someone, I see the person as being in Christ, or potentially being in Christ, for *God our Saviour, desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. When I look at him or her through the glasses of Christian prayer, I see someone to whom the rich promises of God - of forgiveness and new life - also apply. Who even though they might be caught in sin, have the joyous Gospel of forgiveness in Christ going for them.

For it not only pleases God that we live well ordered, peaceful and pious lives, but also, very importantly that all people are saved and come to recognize Christ Jesus as their only real lifeline to Him. To achieve this God has gone to great ends. He came into our world and became Jesus Christ the man, flesh and blood, like us. So that baptised into Jesus we would be able to face him, and survive the experience, live to tell the tale. Paul survived and told the tale. Timothy survived and told the tale. The Ephesians survived and told the tale.

God continuous to let Christ's story be told and in this way reaches out to all people. He lets his story be translated into every culture and language that is spoken by the human race. A story illustrates this. It is a story about an old Afrikaans lady, who had trouble adapting to the first Afrikaans translation of the bible. After she had spent her whole life hearing and reading God's word in Dutch. She proclaimed, “As Hollands goed genoeg was vir die liewe Jesus, is did goed genoeg vir my!” If Dutch was good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me. On the one hand she was right: Hollands was goed genoeg vir die liewe Jesus. Dutch was good enough for Jesus, but so was Afrikaans. Afrikaans was ook goed genoeg vir hom. For *God our Saviour, desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*.

For the Ephesians God sent Paul and Timothy to give testimony, teach, preach, admonish and pray. I thank God that he has again installed a pastor in his Lutheran congregation here in Newcastle and has gathered a hard-working and God-fearing group of people to do his work of testifying here. That he brings them together to thank him and to pray for all people in the Prayer of the Church every Sunday. *Im allgemeinen Kirchengebet*. This Prayer of the Church might sometimes seem very long, tedious and general, but this is important, because in it we are indeed praying for all people! Not just for us and our small parochial group of people, but for all. I further thank Him that He lets his body and blood be translated into bread and wine every Sunday at this Altar. So that we might know and experience him personally on a very human level. So that our sins might be forgiven, our

faith strengthened and our community deepened. And I pray to God that we, against all heresies from within and without, will be able to witness to all people here in Newcastle and beyond, wherever he puts us, his saving Gospel, so that they might be saved and come to the knowledge of truth -

This I pray in Jesus Name, Amen.

**The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ
Jesus. Amen.**