

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

The Very Rev. Fr. Arthur W. Ward, Jr. + Dean

Scripture: Various

"Becoming a Prayer Warrior for the Lord" (3)

THE CALL TO INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Last week we heard Fr. Thebeau address the subject of intercessory prayer. I want to look again at this type of prayer today. If we are to be prayer warriors for the Lord, then we need to understand what intercessory prayer is, why it is important and how do we do it.

Recall Intercessory Prayer is standing in for another before the Lord on their behalf - praying for their needs, for their relationship with the Lord, for their spiritual development and journey – this can be for another person, family, group, church, community, government, nation – you name it. And when we intercede for individuals, it oftentimes involves something they are going through – whether it be a sickness, financial hardship, relational challenge or again their own walks with the Lord.

The powerful reality of Intercessory Prayer is that it is a tangible example of true love because only you and the Lord know that you are doing it. You aren't getting a lot of credit necessarily. You are sacrificing your time for another, your effort for another and sometimes others if you are praying with them. When we intercede on behalf of another, we are including them in our own spirit and life. And we do that for the nation, the parts of the world, for the church, etc. It is a tangible act of selfless love. There is really no self-benefit. I believe that is why prayer meetings in churches always have the worst attendance. There is nothing to be gained self-wise. Think about that for a moment – if we have a movie night or a concert– you are entertained; if there is a worship service, you are fed spiritually through the preaching of the word and through the sacraments; and then of course with many events there is the added benefit of good food. Not with a prayer meeting. And yet that is what God calls us to do. Because it is not about you, it is not about me, but it is about someone else and their relationship with the Lord.

Now last week, we saw how Jesus Himself gives us the example of Intercession. I want us to turn again to **Romans 8:31-34**: ***“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”***

We also see that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, is also involved in interceding on our behalf.

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Rom. 8:26-27)

We are called to do the same as we have heard from Paul in **Ephesians 6:18-19**: *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf."*

In fact, that is one of the primary roles of a priest. To stand between God and man. Look now at **1 Peter 2:9-10**: *"But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY."*

Notice who are identified as priests? All who are God's people – the Church! Jesus is our High Priest but we are called to be like Christ to our world, and that means making intercession for others. We have ordained clergy who function as priests in the church, but did you know that you are to be priests outside the church and to the world?

HOW AND WHAT TO PRAY

Two weeks ago in part 2 we looked at the foundation for our spiritual fitness if we are to be prayer warriors – fuel (God's Word), regimen (daily devotions), rest (set and maintain your priorities), accountability (the Holy Spirit and the Church), and willpower. In part one, we looked at what should be the four aspects of daily prayer time – Adoration (exalting God), Confession (dealing with the sin in our lives), Thanksgiving (being grateful), and Supplication (asking for God's assistance and help for ourselves and others).

Today, I want to answer how are we to pray and what are we to pray for others when it comes to Intercession?

First, we are to always pray in Jesus' name. Why? The name of Jesus represents the authority and power God has given us in Christ. It is why Jesus said in **Mt. 28:18-19**, before commissioning the disciples and giving all of us the Great Commission to preach, teach and baptize, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth – Go and make disciples of all the nations."*

When we pray in Jesus' name, we have Christ's authority to pray before our Father in heaven. But it is not just authority. God has given us the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus – the presence of Jesus in us. That is why Jesus said in **Acts 1:8**, *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the remotest parts of the earth."*

We have supernatural power when we are born again. The power we have is God's power. It is why Jesus said in **Luke 11:13**, *"will He (the Father) not give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"*

In fact, on the night before He died, Jesus prayed for His disciples in **Jn. 17:11**, *"Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are."*

In Acts 2:38, we read that our forgiveness is in Jesus' name: "*Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Why in the power of the Holy Spirit, according to His will and to His glory.*"

And also for healing - in Acts 3:6 we read, "*But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!"*"

And to cast out demons - Acts 16:18: "*She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.*"

Eph. 5:18-20: "*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;"*"

But Paul really sums it up in Col. 3:16-17: "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."* Everything we say and do should be under Christ's authority and by His power!

THE CREDIT CARD ANALOGY

Now I want us to go from the spiritual to the more mundane – to highlight the important spiritual principle of praying in Jesus' name. Notice what I have in my hand – a credit card. What is a credit card? It is a means to pay for something using someone else's – the bank's money.

In order to use the card, you have the authority of the bank. The bank has given you its authority. The power in the card is the money that the bank provides. And then you have the responsibility to use that authority and power responsibly. You shouldn't give the number out. You can't exceed the credit limit, and you should also not spend more than what you can pay back. Also, if you don't use it, eventually you will lose its privileges!

So we have the authority and we have the power to spend money – now we have to use it and use it responsibly. It is no different when it comes to prayer. If we are to pray in Jesus name with His authority and power, then it means asking and seeking those things that are in accord with God's will, His purposes, and His Kingdom. That's what I want for those around me - my loved ones, my church family, my community, my nation, and the world! That is to be our focal point. Praying that God's Kingdom comes and His will be done for those we are praying. God is not going to give you His authority and power for something that is contradictory to His will. How do you know what God's will is? It is in this book, the Bible. The more you know God's Word, the more you will know His will. So we pray in Christ's name.

Second, we are to pray in faith. For not only do we use God's authority we have in Jesus and the power we have in His Spirit, but we use it by faith. **James** gives us an example in **James 1:5-7**, when he says ***"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."***

There is a reason why Jesus said on numerous occasions – ***"O ye of little faith!"*** When I use my credit card, I am trusting that it will work and the bank will have the funds to back up the price for that which I am paying. When you pray, are you trusting that God is accomplishing His will for you and is able to work in their lives for their good.

That's how we move forward in Intercessory Prayer – we pray in Jesus' name – meaning in His authority and in His power (the power of the Holy Spirit), we pray in accordance with His will and Word, and we do it in faith. And if we truly have faith, we will do it consistently, not haphazardly. And we will pray privately at home and publicly in church. That, my brothers and sisters, is Intercessory Prayer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!