

April 25, 2021

Intercessory Prayer

By Rev. Edgar F. Solís

Intro.

Intercessory prayer is a practice that believers who genuinely believe in God exercise with love and faith. Intercession means "to come in between" to "interpose on behalf of someone." Now, in order to practice this kind of prayer, we must believe that God is listening and that our prayers will be answered. Believe it or not there are Christians that have doubts about the power of prayer.

A tale is told about a small town that had historically been "dry," but then a local businessman decided to build a tavern. A group of Christians from a local church were concerned and planned an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene. It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground. The owner of the bar sued the church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible, but the church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible. After his initial review of the case, the presiding judge stated that "no matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians do not."

We are called to pray, to present our prayers to God for the good of others. Jesus gave us a model to follow when he prayed not only for God's will in his life but also when he prayed for others.

Bible passage's principles

In today's gospel passage, we can see Jesus praying. There are at least three important principles that we can identify in Jesus' prayer.

1. He first presents himself to God. He prayed for God be glorified. Jesus prioritizes a close relationship with the Divine so he can focus on the mission that God had entrusted to him. God's mission must be nurtured by a powerful connection with the Divine. I mentioned this to the evening prayer group. The most prominent world leaders who have changed the course of human history have had a powerful connection with a higher power. Since ancient history, people who were leaders of the most remarkable changes and transformations in the world have been people who were spiritually intense; they were people of prayer. The list is long, but let's remember Abraham, Moses, and the apostles, Peter, John and Paul. When the Christian church experienced its reformation in the 16th century, we had people of prayer like Luther and John Knox. Later on, when England was facing a great religious and social crisis, God called John Wesley to lead a powerful movement that later became the Methodist Church. People of prayer have a significant impact and not just in the religious arena. Let's remember that Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. were able to impact their time and world by bringing crucial transformations to human society. The development of a strong connection with God results in the enrichment of the spirit and the sense of human solidarity with just causes that can transform the reality of this broken world.

2. Jesus prayed for his people, for his disciples and for his friends.

He entrusted the community to God's care, and today we too are called to pray for our church, for the church in the world, for The United Methodist Church, and for The Iowa Annual Conference. Through prayer, we can experience and express unity which serves as a witness to the world. When we are united with God's love through prayer, we are able to fulfill God's mission.

When we practice intercessory prayer, we demonstrate our love and our solidarity with our partners and journey companions, but in order to pray for them and with them, we need to develop an intentional relationship of Christian friendship, interact with solidarity, respect and compassion. When was the last time you called someone and asked how you could pray for them?

3. And last but not least, as incredible as it may seem, Jesus prayed for you! Yes!

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

Fascinating! Jesus prayed for us so that we might demonstrate God's presence in the world. Jesus prays for you and me!

Theological reflection on Intercession.

Brothers and sisters, God is calling us to pray for others, for our family's needs, for our neighborhoods, for our city. We must be honest, many times we only pray because we are in trouble or we need something. When was the last time you offered a prayer of intercession for others?

This reminds me of a story someone told me. While they were attending a church service in Kentucky, they watched an especially verbal and boisterous child being slung under his irate father's arm and hurried out. No one in the congregation so much as raised an eyebrow -- until the child captured everyone's attention by crying out in a charming Southern accent, "Ya'll pray for me now!" Oh yes indeed, he needed a prayer! And we all need prayer. Yes dear church, we are called to intercede for each other. I firmly believe that our prayers impact today's reality and I also believe that our prayers have the power to move God's heart. We can be witnesses of God's actions today. Through prayer, our faith is strengthened and our hope in God is reinforced! I believe in intercessory prayer. I am here today because of the prayers of many; members of my home church, my friends, my pastors, my mom, my family and yes, Jesus. My life was transformed through intercessory prayer and I want to be a member of a new generation that leaves a legacy of transformation.

Conclusion.

Beloved Church, this is the time of prayer. Jesus calls us to express with concrete acts of love and compassion a deep and passionate prayer for our families, communities, and our city.

God calls us to a fruitful legacy of service, compassion, and faith. However, all of this cannot be possible if we are unwilling to have a close relationship with God, the source of all love and power. Through our prayers and the presence of Jesus in our actions, God can manifest his power, and we will be able to say, "We are stronger because through prayer we are experiencing a new life." Yes, through our intercessory prayers,

the Church may say, "Because of our prayers, we have a stronger church that expresses the love and grace of God to everyone". New families, new people will come and declare, that we are a church that faithfully shares the good news of God to the helpless; a church that accepts, loves, and welcomes all people." Through our prayers and concrete actions of mercy, let's become a church that makes disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Amen!