

**September 30, 2007**  
**Pentecost 18**

*"Praying for Peace in Our Land"*

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**1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8**

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*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- <sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all men-- the testimony given in its proper time. <sup>7</sup>And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-- I am telling the truth, I am not lying-- and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup>I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*

This past week a lady stopped by the church from the Santa Barbara elections office to discuss using our fellowship hall for elections coming up in 2007 and 2008. We have allowed our local government to use our fellowship hall for elections. This is one way that we as a congregation can show our respect and support for the government that plays such an important part in our lives. You can show your support for your government in your personal life by paying your taxes, respecting your leaders whoever they might be, obeying the laws of the land, and also daily praying for your government.

This morning we want to use these words that were just read to you from 1 Timothy to underscore how important it is to pray for peace in our land. If we have peace in our land then we can live our lives in peace and quietness. We can also continue to enjoy opportunities to talk to people about a peace this world cannot give, a peace we have in Jesus.

In the 1960's President John F. Kennedy called people to serve their country with these words, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." What can you do for country that will help more than anything? You can pray specifically for continued peace in our land.

**We pray that we might live peaceful lives**

The Apostle Paul called on Timothy to make it a high priority in worship to pray for the government and its leaders. "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority." Paul does not say, "I suggest" or "I think" he says, "I urge...." The Greek word is made of two words put together that literally means, "I call to you." The coach calls his team together and urges them to listen to what he has to say because it is of utmost importance.

There almost seems to be an overemphasis here on the importance of prayer with the words, "That requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all." It is such a privilege for us to gather together in worship to pray, including praying for our government.

Remember how fervently we prayed in our churches for our government and its leaders the first Sunday after the terrorist attack on September 11. Why can't we do this every week in worship? We can and we should!

When we pray we are doing so much more than just share our thoughts or generate good vibrations and feelings together. When we pray we are coming before our God, the creator of universe, our heavenly Father. We ask him to hear our prayers and answer them according to his will. We have this privilege direct access to God through Jesus. Romans 5 tells us, "Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access into this grace in which we stand." You don't have to cut yourselves with knives and beat yourself with sticks, clap your hands to get the attention of your God. You have been justified. That means declared not guilty of your sin through Jesus. This allows us to even call God our heavenly Father and come to him with jumbo requests and little requests. It allows us to bless our country and its leaders with the mighty power of prayer. It cost us nothing but it cost Jesus everything to give this privilege of prayer to us. How amazing!

According to Paul there is a real important value and purpose to our prayers for our country "That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." When God's people were hauled away into captivity in Babylon they were told to serve that heathen government by daily praying that there might be peace in the land in which they lived as captives for 70 years. The Lord said through Jeremiah, "Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Even an evil empire like Rome needed the prayers of Christians to preserve the famous "Pax Romana" the peace of Rome.

We tap into so much power when we call on our God to use his mighty power and strength to rule nations, overcome tyrants and bring greater peace to the world. Psalm 46 says of the Lord, "Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has done on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire." I once talked to a man who drilled oil wells here in the Santa Maria area. I asked him if they ever discovered anything strange as they were drilling into the ground. He told of oil wells around Guadalupe that dug through 20 feet of redwood 400 feet down in the ground. What amazing forces of nature the Lord our God has unleashed on our world in the past! We have the privilege of tapping into that power and asking the Lord to grant us greater peace in our world.

O my dear Christians think of the peace we have enjoyed in our land for so many years. Oh, I know that there were terrorists who attacked our land on September 11. How thankful we can be that since that time there have not been more attacks as we have feared. We are able to live our lives in peace. We have law enforcement officers who patrol our streets to protect us, and soldiers who train in our armies to protect us in times of war. We have government leaders who watch our water supply to make sure it is safe, and watch over the food we eat, and we even have a system in place to take our garbage to the dump so it does not rot in the streets. So many people want to come to our country from all over the world because of the peace we have and the opportunities we have every day to live our lives in peace and quietness. God bless America. Bless our land with continued peace.

**We pray for all people to know the peace that is in Jesus**

When there is peace in our land it allows us to freely and openly talk to people about a peace that this world cannot give, the peace that is found only in Jesus. God wants this peace to come into the lives of all people. This praying for peace is good because God "wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." God wants all men or people to be saved. If there is peace in our land it allows us to talk to people about how much the Lord our God cares about them. This supreme love for all people was summarized by Jesus so succinctly and so superbly with the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." When Jesus died on the cross he cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished." Jesus finished the job of paying for all sin of all people of all time. Isaiah the prophet made it clear, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." By believing in this amazing work of Christ these blessings personally become your very own. You have peace with God, a peace that you could never acquire on your own.

This peace with God is offered to all people only through Jesus as Paul wrote, "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as ransom for all men." There is one God, not many gods as some religions claim. There is only one true God, the God who has revealed himself to us in the Bible uniquely as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet one God." A couple of weeks ago I was turning channel on the radio as I was driving. One morning talk show host made the statement that he cannot stand Christians who call into his show and act as if they are the only true religion and without that religion people will be damned. He said that most Christians he knows are nice people, but there are only a few loony people who think their religion is the only way back to God. Isn't that what Paul is saying clearly, "and one mediator between God and men." Didn't Jesus himself say, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me?"

When I heard that man speak on the radio, I thought to myself, "I wonder how many people living in this community believe that all religions provided a way back to God, whatever the religion may be." How do we answer these people who challenge us for our narrow beliefs? The key word is "ransom." Only in the Christian faith do you have God coming into our world and becoming one of us. Only in the Christian faith does Jesus our Lord take on our sin, pay for them completely, and then rise from the dead. Only in the Bible will you discover that you have nothing to offer God to remove your problem of sin and mediate your standing with God. You come to know how lost and condemned you are and how you are without hope. Only in the Christian faith does the message proclaim clearly, "I have done it all for you!" On the night of his resurrection Jesus showed the nail prints in his hands and said, "Peace be to you." The message is exclusive, but it also inclusive because God wants all to be saved. We want people everywhere in our land and throughout the world to come to know this peace.

Paul saw the importance of his life on this earth for bringing this peace to other people. "And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle- I am telling the truth, I am not lying- and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles." How will we get this message of peace in Jesus to people who are still at war with a holy and righteous God because they do not know this peace Jesus has given them? On the night of Jesus birth the Lord God chose angels to deliver a message of peace on earth that comes through Jesus. The Lord could still use angels to spread the word as they come down to this earth in human form. That was not the plan. The plan was to appoint people like Paul and Timothy and you and

me to herald the message of peace through Jesus. In ancient times the herald went into the villages and cried out "Hear ye! Hear ye! I have a message from the king." The people gathered listened. That's where we come into God's plan. We are left on this earth to be heralds and talk to people about our king. It is our job to direct the eyes of people to the wounds in the hands of Jesus and tell them the words Jesus spoke to all people when he said, "Peace to you."

This morning we give thanks to our God for our government that allows us to be able to tell the truth of about Jesus to people without fear of being persecuted, put to death, or put into prison. We also pray fervently that we might be used to take this message of peace that we have in Jesus and bring it to people we know who are still without hope. Amen.