

A Burden for the Other
3rd in a series on prayer
Matthew 5:43-45a; 6:5-8
February 17, 2019 LUMC

Theme: Passion to pray for others

Today's text comes from the famous "Sermon on the Mount". The generally agreed location for this sermon is on the hills above the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee and very near to Capernaum. It is a place Jesus spent much time in-between travels. I don't believe this is the only time Jesus preached this sermon; it contains the heart of his ministry and teaching on what it means to be a follower of God and how to live a holy life. It also has some hard parts for us to work with.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven." Let's just admit that the last thing most of us want to do is pray for our enemies but Jesus doesn't leave that option for us. This is the hard work of discipleship. Our instructions to pray today come immediately before the Lord's Prayer teaching in Matthew 6 so we need to consider all of it.

How do you build a passion for others? How do we approach this difficult work of prayer which leads us to action? We're going to cover a full-day workshop topic in about 20 minutes this morning, so buckle-up and hang on.

Often called, "Intercessory prayer," this kind of prayer is always focused on the 'other' person or persons. It is never about 'me.' So, when you pray, "Dear lord, please make my husband more caring and put the seat down, and pick up his dirty underwear, and put his dishes in the sink, in fact, it'd be great if he'd wash the dishes once in a while. Thank you, Amen." That's not intercessory prayer. It's selfish, it's not what Jesus was talking about, but it's pretty darn common way to pray. Don't worry ladies, I have a prayer the

Rather, Intercession – to intercede, step into their shoes, mediate, get involved, it altogether a different action. You become a voice for the other when they either can't or don't know how to pray for themselves, in essence, you "usher" them into God's presence even if they aren't fully aware of what's happening or what you are doing. Intercession is a gift of prayer to someone else even if they don't know what you are doing.

Praying for others, including your enemies, is Christ's compassion released at a point of a person's first need. Sometimes this takes the perspective of personal prayer ministry in public. Think of Elijah on the mount, or Jesus praying for Lazarus. Often, we

pray for healing for others. Now, some objections I hear include, “Well, I don’t believe in healing prayer,” or “I prayed for her, but nothing happened, so I stopped.” John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement wrote that “when we prayed for people to be healed, some were. When we didn’t pray, no one was healed.”¹

One Sunday, a man stood in church and asked for prayer for his wife who had cancer. They were travelling through town. We’d probably never see them again. But, Norm felt a burden for this woman so he added her to his prayer list and prayed for her every day....for three years! He began to ask God, is it time to stop praying for her but he didn’t seem to get an answer for that, so he persisted for several months. One Sunday, a man stood up in church and said, “We were here three years ago, and I asked for prayers for my wife. Against all odds, she is cancer-free.”

Norm’s was a burden for someone he didn’t know and thought he’d never see again, but he felt that call to continue. Norm trusts God and he wants to be in God’s will every day.

Sometimes, praying for the other is extremely difficult; perhaps an ex, or for someone who has deeply hurt you, or for people whom you see as the enemy. When you allow the hurt, unforgiveness, or bitterness to remain, you are hostage to it. You allow yourself to remain in bondage. Forgiveness frees you and when you intercede for that person, you acknowledge God’s image in them and God’s power to heal. When you hold on to those feelings, you are giving in to the enemy’s hold but here’s the deal about power. The folks who have been in the Goliath Must Fall study, have learned something about snakes. If you cut-off the head of a rattle snake, that head can still bite you.... for up to an hour or more. The head of our enemy was cut-off that day when Jesus hung on the cross. But the enemy can still bite. We still live in the fallen world. But you don’t have to fall for his tricks.

Test the spirits, John writes in 1 John 4, because, **“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”** Stop giving Satan power by falling for his tricks, by denying God’s greater power, by holding onto bitterness, hatred, and unforgiveness. Having a burden for the other changes our perspective on the kingdom here and now.

Bruce Nolan, AKA Jim Carey, formerly a selfish man comes to terms with this notion of truly loving someone unselfishly when he is confronted by God in *Bruce Almighty*, and commanded to pray. His first attempt is a bit weak but watch the second attempt.

¹ Wimber, John, Power Healing, 1987

(Play clip from Bruce Almighty, “Now That’s a Prayer” 2:42 – a copy can be found on You Tube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4i31INDztQ>)

Having a burden for others begins by receiving God’s forgiveness and full grace for yourself. Psalm 103:8-12 instructs:

**⁸The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.**

**⁹He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;**

**¹⁰he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.**

**¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;**

**¹²as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.**

Know and receive God’s saving grace and recognize his power over everything else.

Secondly, having a burden for others recognizes that you are not a miracle worker but a ‘point of contact’ between that person and God. Like the stretcher bearers who brought a lame man to Jesus, even cutting through the roof to reach him, we don’t give up.

Third, we allow that person or persons to have a personal experience of God’s grace at their pace. It is not your job to force God’s grace, he doesn’t work that way, and neither should we.

Fourth, when we see God working, and the more you intercede, the more you will see that work, we give God the glory – we always point to him.

Miss Clara, played by Karen Abercrombie, in the film, The War Room, became a prayer warrior for Liz and Tony’s marriage. Clara is modeled after Feisty Molly Bruno a real living 91-year-old prayer warrior (at the time of the movie in 2016) and it’s her real Bible in the film. The war with Satan may be won, but we are still in the battle and God is asking for warriors to go to battle in prayer and action to fully bring the kingdom of God to reality. Let’s see if Miss Clara can inspire you too.

(Video clip: Prayer Scene at the end. 3:00) Here is a You Tube clip:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpfkFyG5qQ>

Meet Molly Bruno: <https://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=1JB0C1NU>