Putting Prayer in its Proper Place

Message Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Main Idea: Prayer's place is at the front of the line, not the back of it.

Prayer is not the last resort. It is the first and best option.

1. Petitions, Prayers, Intercession, and Thanksgiving Be Made for All People

There is a fundamental truth at the basis of all prayer: **God is Better than Us.**

And He knows it and isn't afraid to own it:

- Isaiah 40:25. "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

- Isaiah 46:5 "With whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?

Why is He better?

- He doesn't slumber or sleep (Psalm 121:3-4).

- He doesn't even grow tired or weary, either emotionally, physically or mentally.

- His understanding no one can fathom (Isaiah 40:28). Nothing is too difficult for Him (Jeremiah 32:17).

- He's not like a man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19).

- His love surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). Which makes it truly mind-blowing love.

- Matthew 7:11, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

Believing and accepting this by faith can make us more consistent and confident in our prayers for others.

When we acknowledge that God is better than us it is called humility.

When we put prayer in its proper place; it automatically puts us in our proper place.

When Joseph was touted as a man who could interpret dreams, he pointed to the Lord's ability, not his own. He said, "I cannot do it, but God…" (Genesis 41:16).

There are many things we cannot do for people, but God can.

2. For Kings and All Those in Authority

He doesn't instruct us to like them or agree with them, but as long as they are in authority, we are to pray for them.

3. Thanksgiving

Don't just pray for others; give thanks for what God is already doing in their lives to influence them and draw them to Himself, for God is indeed at work in them.

Don't just pray for unfulfilled desires and needs; thank Him for the work He is doing in response to your prayers in your own life and situation.

Jesus knew that even when He couldn't see it, God was working. (John 11:41-42).

Paul prayed that the _eyes of the hearts_ of the Ephesians would be enlightened (Ephesians 1:18) because he knew that was God's work.

Walking by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) includes giving thanks for the unseen grace and the faithfulness of God we are experiencing.

As Elijah prayed for his servant, "Open his eyes, Lord" (2 Kings 6:17).

Direct Benefit to the Lord: Most of our Christian service is directed to others and we do them to honor You. Our thanksgiving comes directly to You and is all about You!

4. Who Wants All People to be Saved and to Come to a Knowledge of the Truth

- **God so loved the world… (John 3:16).**

- **I will draw all men unto myself (John 12:32).**

- **Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. (John 6:37)**

Prayer is also an MRI

- A funny thing can happen during prayer. God can and does shine the light on us as we are praying for other and point out our flaws in thinking and our own blind spots.

- I have learned about the Lord is that He deals with me with graciously and honestly. As a result, I talk truthfully with Him – and that is called

Prayer Helps Us to be Effective: Efficiency and effectiveness are not the same thing. Efficiency is maximizing my effort to my desired results. Effectiveness, on the other hand, is being receptive and responsive to God's desired results. Even if it means doing nothing at the time.

In paradox, waiting on the Lord is sometimes one of the most effective things we can do.

Sometimes we can be far too presumptuous about what is best for us or for someone else.

Whereas some would reproach the effectiveness of prayer by saying, "Don't just pray about it do something. I would rather say, "Don't just do something, pray about it."

Because "**prayer's proper place is at the front of the line, not the back of it**."