

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus be yours. Amen. The title for today’s sermon is “A Mediated Life” and comes from the Epistle reading, 1 Timothy chapter 2. Let us pray...Amen.

At 2:10 a.m., on November 5, 1995, a man named André, arrived at the home of the man he wanted dead. He spent 20 minutes throwing rocks over the fence. Then armed with a knife he climbed the fence and proceeded to break into the house by smashing a window. Police were called and André was arrested. Now, home invasions happen with some frequency, but what makes this case so much different is André Dallaire entered the Prime Minister of Canada’s official residence at 24 Sussex Drive. Imagine, a man so bold as to try to break into the Prime Minister’s home while he slept.

But now, for a much less sinister reason, imagine a person just walking into the House of Commons in Ottawa to get access to the Prime Minister. Better yet, imagine that person is you. You desperately want to talk to Stephen Harper because of some burning issue that only he can help you with.

But let’s be honest. There are far too many barriers between you and the Prime Minister. Doors are locked. Security is in place. His staff does not know your name. /// Far too often we don’t have the right connections with the right person at the right time to accomplish all the right things. There are official channels to go through, but rarely will you get to speak directly to the Prime Minister. We need a mediator to get in the door.

There are barriers between us and the Prime Minister; but even more massive barriers exist between us and God. Why? Because Paul is not the only chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). You are. And so am I. And the chief sin, in a word is Pride. Medieval artists depicted pride as a peacock strutting his stuff. In the book *Paradise Lost*, Milton portrays pride with the words; “*Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.*” Pride refuses to utter the three hardest words in the English language, “I was wrong.” Or the four hardest, “I am not perfect.” Or the five, “I guess you are right.” Or the six, “I think I need some help.” Pride blocks our access to “the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God”(1 Timothy 1:17).

But now go back to the House of Commons in Ottawa. What if Stephen Harper looked out his window and saw you? What if he gave the command and security escorted you right into his office? And what if he listened attentively to you and made all the changes you asked for?

With the Prime Minister this is too good to be true. But with Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and man, we have access to our heavenly Father. **“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”(2:5-6)** Jesus came because God **“desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”(2:4)**

The truth is that it all came to a head one morning. The Jews in Jerusalem wanted Barabbas and the soldiers wanted to have some fun. Herod wanted a show. Pilate wanted out. Caiaphas wanted death. And the executioners? All they wanted was Jesus blood. Their strategy was singular; beat Him

to within an inch of death and stop. With His back lacerated they shoved a crossbeam on His back. When He came to the Place of the Skull there they nailed Him to wood. And there He hung, giving His life as a ransom for your sin and the sins of the whole world.

And now, because He rose on the Third Day, you and I have access to God through Christ. Paul explains this by saying “**First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people...**”. First and foremost, this is what is most important. Pray. Prayer is communicating with God through Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and Thanksgivings. This is a privilege all Christians share. We are encouraged to talk to God in these four ways. Through Supplications – praying that evil be averted, and approaching God with what we truly need, also recognizing that only God provides all good things; in Prayers – a general category where we approach God asking for His good gifts; through Intercessions – boldly and confidently bringing our requests before God and asking for His blessings on others who need it, especially our enemies and those who persecute us; and in Thanksgivings – for all God has done. In gratitude for His mercy and all He provides every day of our life. It involves recognizing God’s gifts to us.

Because of Christ’s work in your place – because He ransomed you – you can pray to God at anytime and He hears and answers you. Christ’s ransomed you with His own life and blood. Through them He mediates your life in Himself and with the Father. He is our only mediator. With Christ as our mediator we have direct access to the Father. We are called to pray and to trust His Word, ‘Thy will, God’s will be done.’

In Christ we are called to pray for all people as we do for ourselves. Paul tells Timothy, along with each of us, how God wants prayers for ALL PEOPLE. This includes those people we like; it also includes those people we really dislike. Jesus told His disciples this in the Gospel of Matthew, “<sup>43</sup> **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”**(5:43-44) This can be difficult, yet it is also a blessing.

Paul includes the importance of praying for our government and all our leaders. Paul knew firsthand what it meant to have enemies, both regular people and the state. He had been beaten, stoned, whipped, etc, for proclaiming God’s Word of repentance and forgiveness in Christ. Paul also knew how evil some leaders could be. He lived at the time of Nero, who killed numerous Christians, and in Paul’s imprisonment for the faith he faced execution. Still Paul encouraged prayers for government leaders because they are instituted by God. Their position deserves honour and respect. Paul knew a stable civil government allows Christians to carry out their mission unhindered and without harassment. He enjoyed the stability in the Roman Empire as we do now in Canada. We are richly blessed to live in a country with a stable government, without sever persecution of the Christian faith, and with the freedom to pray and share God’s saving Word.

These prayers are good and pleasing to God because He wants all people to be saved. This may go against our natural sinful inclinations because we think some people are just too evil. Some are beyond

saving or they do not deserve to be saved and so for them prayers are not prayed. But this mindset is not pleasing to God because it is sinful.

Johan Bengel once wrote, "Why are not more converted? We do not pray enough." (1873 commentary) God calls us to pray and to live our lives in Christ, but when we fail to do either, both suffer as does our witness to the world around us.

God "**desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**" (2:4) Christ came for all people. He shed His blood to cover all sins for every person. The truth that God wants all people to be saved is corroborated by the fact that Christ 'gave Himself as a ransom for all'. This is sometimes called the scandal of the cross, or the scandal of Christianity. It is not so much that murderers, liars, or adulterers can repent and be forgiven, but that Jesus even died for their sins.

The truth is people are not condemned because they murder, or steal, or lie, but because they reject Jesus as the one who has already endured hell for them on the cross, and earned a place for them in heaven. There is no one who is so evil that they are beyond redemption, because the redemption of Christ envelops all people. Because of this God wants us to pray for all people. Scripture is clear, "*our works cannot reconcile us with God or obtain grace for us, for this happens only through faith, that is, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who alone is the mediator who reconciles the Father. (1 Timothy 2:5)*"<sup>10</sup> *Whoever imagines that he can accomplish this by works, or that he can merit grace, despises Christ and seeks his own way to God, contrary to the Gospel.*"<sup>11</sup> *This teaching about faith is plainly and clearly treated by Paul in many passages, especially in Eph. 2:8, 9, 'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.'*" (AC XX, 9-11)

The only way people are saved is they come to a knowledge of the truth. Jesus proclaimed there is only ONE TRUTH. He said, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**" (John 14:6) And there is only ONE NAME when it comes to salvation: Jesus. "**For there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**" (Acts 4:12) This may go in the face of our post-modern culture, but the truth is the truth, even if nobody wants to believe it.

There is only one Saviour. There is only one mediator between God and us; "the man Christ Jesus." Verses 5 and 6 explain Paul's comment in verse 4 regarding God's will for all people to be saved. Paul clearly proclaims the Gospel, "**For there is ONE God, and there is ONE mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,**"<sup>6</sup> **who gave Himself as a ransom for all**". (2:5-6) Paul is perfectly clear. There is ONE God, not many. There is ONE Mediator, not many. If you pray to, or wish upon any other god than the revealed God of Scripture – the FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT, then you are praying to idols or demons. If you are praying to, or hoping to use any other mediator than the God ordained one, Christ Jesus, the ONE who ransomed your life with His, then you are also praying to deaf idols who can neither hear you or intercede for you. God's Word is clear; there is only One mediator.

No one else can save you. God’s says in Psalms “**Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,**”(Psalm 49:7)

Here we see the majesty and glory of God. Christ is the only one who could be our Saviour. God told Isaiah “**I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.**”(Isaiah 43:11) No person by their works could ever save themselves because it is only in, and because of Christ and His work that we are saved. Jesus came to be our mediator before God and to save us. Gabriel foretold this to Joseph: “**Mary will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.**”(Matthew 1:21) “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”(Romans 8:34)

What greater blessing is there? Christ came for you. He took your sins and paid for them. Jesus continues to come to you with His own Word and Sacrament in which He strengthens your faith and gives you eternal life. Jesus is your mediator with God. And He didn’t just do it for the nice people, the good people, or the self-righteous people, Christ did it for everyone. God’s Law condemns us equally for our sins, but it is a rejection of Christ and a refusal to repent which condemns eternally to hell. Instead, God, by His Word, leads us to repentance. Now, “*for the sake of the only mediator, Christ, through faith alone, without any work or merit on our part, we are justified and accepted into grace before God. There He gives the Holy Spirit, who renews and sanctifies all who believe and creates within them love toward God and their fellowman. But the beginning of renewal is imperfect in this life. Sin still dwells in the flesh, even in the regenerated. Therefore, the righteousness of faith before God comes from the free crediting of Christ’s righteousness, without the addition of our works. So our sins are forgiven and covered and not charged against us.*(Rom. 4:6–8).”(SD III, 23)

We finally have the right connections with the right person at the right time to accomplish the right things, for the glory and honor of God! So why remain outside, alone, standing on the sidewalk, feeling as though you have no access to the most powerful person in the universe? You don’t have to try to break in since you are already in Christ! As such we are encouraged to “**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**”(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) It doesn’t matter what the situation, or how great the sorrow or joy, Christ Jesus is with you at all times. This is His promise to you. Thanks be to God! Amen.

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