

## *Midweek Message*

“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7 ESV).

As we read through the Old Testament, we come across numerous instances when God sent His beloved people into exile as a matter of discipline for their continued rebellion against Him. We find this to be true of this particular time in which Jeremiah is God’s prophet to convey His message of hope to them while they are under His chastisement for their sinfulness. However, as they enter into exile, God gives them a message in which He tells them *to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* Although we’re not currently in exile this call of God from Jeremiah is very applicable and appropriate for us as God’s people today. We saw this past Sunday that under the New Covenant we’re called to pray “for kings and all who are in high positions” and I firmly believe this coincides with Jeremiah’s words to God’s ancient people and those words are certainly true in every age in which we continue to live as we await the return of our Lord. We all realize that as a nation prospers so do the people who reside in that nation. As such, it’s imperative for us to be those who pray for our leaders and our nation so that in its welfare, we will find our welfare and that’s especially true in this election year. So, what I’d like to do in this midweek message is make a few suggestions on how to pray for our leaders and our country.

One way we should pray is for wisdom both for those who’ll be elected as well as the voters who elect them. We’re told that *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him”* (James 1:5 ESV). Now, in context it’s referring to the individual who desires wisdom, but I would also say we can pray that God grants wisdom to others, especially in this election year. So many people will be voting on various issues, for candidates of different parties, which is how we do things here in our country. Voters will also be using different criteria to evaluate the candidate and other issues that will be on the ballots. Some will cast their vote based on principle and policy and others will cast their vote based on popularity or personality. Most will make a combination of those things as they cast their votes. Scripture tells us. *“My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble”* (Proverbs 3:21-23 ESV). As for the candidates themselves, we certainly desire that those who are elected would have the wisdom from God so they might govern with a proper understanding of their calling and the genuine needs of their constituents. What we should desire from our leaders is that Self-interest be laid aside for the common good of all and that discernment between truth and falsehood would be made clear so that God’s blessings would come upon us as a nation.

Another way we should pray is for the church in America that we would take a stand for righteousness and lovingly present the truth of the gospel to a godless society. Believe it or not this has a lot to do with our election process in our nation as well as what follows after it. Although I personally don’t believe the church is to be a political entity in our country, I do believe the church should be the means through which God calls a nation to repentance over its sinfulness. Jesus tells us,

*“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

The only way the church can be salt and light in the midst of this spiritual darkness is if we ourselves are becoming what God desires and then living out the truth of His Word, expressing genuine love, biblical love, to a world that’s lost and spiraling downward into sinful depravity. If we, as the church, who’ve been given the Scriptures, don’t live by them or proclaim them, then how can we expect the world around us, especially this country in which God has placed us, to come to a knowledge of the truth? The Apostle Paul tells us,

*“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.” (Philippians 3:14-16 ESV)*

You see, it’s only through our living in holiness, striving to be obedient to the Lord, loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, that we become the lights shining in the darkness and point others to the salvation that’s found in Jesus, proclaiming the word of life, and bringing about change in our land, one life at a time.

A third way we should pray is for God’s will to be accomplished through this election and afterward in our country. Have you realized we pray this every week in the Lord’s prayer when we recite the words, *“Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”* (Matthew 6:10 ESV)? When we think about heaven we must realize it’s a place where there is no sin whatsoever, where God is always and perfectly glorified, where His people, as well as the angels, are praising Him always, and where nothing ever brings about His righteous indignation. Now, when we grasp that truth and we pray for that to occur on earth, then we begin to grasp how much still needs to be done in this world. I know that we’ll never achieve that perfectly until Jesus returns, but we can be moving in that direction. In this election, we should be praying for God’s candidates to be elected so that His great plan of redemption will continue to move forward and bring about another revival which is so desperately needed in our country. Listen, I honestly don’t know who those candidates are as I cannot see the future and have no power to determine the future. I’ve voted in accordance with what I believe is the right selections, but I fully submit myself to the power of God who knows infinitely more than I could ever understand. We may think that if this person or that person is voted in then God’s will can be more easily accomplished. However, God may have a different plan going forward that will bring about an even greater revival if some other candidate is elected. My point, is that we should do the best we can, weighing the principles and policies of each candidate carefully, making our vote, and then resting in God’s sovereignty as we know He has everything moving forward to the day when Jesus will return and usher in His eternal Kingdom of peace.

There are many other ways in which we can pray for our nation, but to cover them all would require a much longer article. These are just some of the major ways in which we can pray, especially in light of our current political climate and our upcoming election. The main emphasis is that we must be a people of prayer who long to see God at work in our nation.

***Pastor Mark***