

Sunday, June 20, 2021 1 Samuel 3:1-18 Isaiah 6:1-8, Acts 9:10-20

Dangerous Prayers: Send me

What does it mean to have a 'deeper prayer life'? As we continue to read Craig Groeschel's book Dangerous Prayers, we are being put into another level of praying because it is not comfortable or easy. Putting ourselves into deeper prayer means that we want a more intimate relationship with God because we fully want to depend upon him, and let God truly lead our lives. Having a deeper prayer life means that we are called to prayer yes, but it also means that as we continue to pray, we are asking God to touch the lives of others as we ourselves will be changed. The subtitle states: "Because following Jesus was never meant to be safe". This might even call us to think that we need to be challenged in new ways because God knows that the life we have been living for these last 15-16 months or even maybe throughout your whole life has been challenging but what is God preparing us for in the months to come?

A question to consider regarding your prayers to God in this last week. What did you pray for, that is what did you ask God to do? There is nothing wrong with asking for God to bring peace, healing, support, love for others in need as this is what God also asks us to do. But did you ask God to direct your words and actions? Have you asked God to show you what He wants you to do?

In January 1961, the newly inaugurated US President John F. Kennedy delivered a famous challenge to future generations. "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." This was truly a patriotic speech but if we were to change the words slightly and say, "Don't just ask God for what God can do for you. Ask God about what you can do to serve Him". What if we prayed a dangerous, prayer saying that we are available to serve Him without excuses, what might occur? A whole new perspective of serving God in the way of Christ Jesus, unconditionally and without reserve.

This is a third 'dangerous' prayer offered by Groeschel, 'Send Me, Lord. Use me.' This prayer leads us to places where we never thought possible. It may also lead us down the street or it may take us nowhere and keep us right where we are. But in all circumstances, we will be able to serve God to the best of our ability. How God responds to this prayer still has us making decisions. For as people, we will often say, I will go where you want me to go, but only under certain conditions. And this is what makes this prayer dangerous—do we really mean it? To be sent by God into the unknown? For when we ask God to send us—we do not know what kind of future we will have or where, or with whom. Yet we are still called to serve.

When Samuel was born to Hannah, his birth was seen as a gift from God. She had earnestly prayed for a son and she promised that when it was time, he would be returned to God's service. Fulfilling this promise, Samuel began to serving God under Eli the priest. At that time, the word of the Lord was rare and visions were not widespread. With this introduction we soon learn that Samuel did have visions and God did speak to him a young child. God had called him, "Samuel, Samuel" but the boy did not know it was God. He ran to Eli and asked him

what he needed. Eli told him to go back to bed. Not only did God call out to Samuel a second time, but also a third. Eli realized what was happening and told Samuel to respond, "Speak, Lord for your servant is listening." God then told him what was going to happen in Israel which would shake everyone up and get their attention. (tingle). Later on in the morning, Samuel told Eli that what was going to happen was that Eli's family would be punished because they were going against God. Samuel was called by God to serve. He grew up to be a trustworthy prophet of God.

But what might happen if you share this prayer, "Send Me, God". There are only a few options. Be like Jonah, or Moses, or do what the prophet Isaiah suggests. Jonah was called by God to go to Ninevah- a city filled with sinful and rebellious people. God knew Jonah had the gifts, power and ability to change this city to God. But Jonah said, "No, I won't go." And then he tried to run away from God but sailing on a boat and eventually become a belly ache in a large fish. Eventually we know that he did go where God wanted to send him and the city of Ninevah turned to God. He brought God's message to the people and they listened.

Maybe you've prayed this prayer "Send me, God,"- but not there to those people or to do that! How do you think God feels when the prejudices or racist ideas come out against people he has created and loved? Just think about people who come to Canada to serve God in different ways and encountering racist actions and slurs? Maybe they were like Jonah and said "no", too!

A second option is shared through the story of Moses' call to lead the Hebrew people to the Promised Land. Moses was filled with insecurities when God called to him. His response? "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? I'm not a good speaker. Suppose they don't believe I've talked with you. I cannot do this. Please send someone else!" But we know that Moses with other leaders did lead the people to the land God promised.

Have you heard God calling to you to do something? Maybe God spoke to you, not through a burning bush, but in your mind as thoughts moved around. What did you do? Say no with good reasons or were they just excuses? When God challenges us to give of ourselves we often will say, "Yes, but God..." then we rationalize what is happening in our lives first. I can't do that- I don't have time. There must be someone else. Here I am, but send someone else.

The third option to this prayer is the dangerous response requiring much faith. It is risky because it will move you to action. IT will probably lead you to do something that may not seem natural or easy. It will cause us to step out of your comfort zone. The prophet Isaiah tells of his encounter with God as he asked, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Without knowing any details- when, or where, Isaiah prayed, "Here I am, Send me." When Isaiah offered himself to God, it was a difficult time for Israel. Their beloved King Uzziah had died and the country fell into a time of chaos, turmoil and desperation. But Isaiah saw God and experienced him in a unique way and responded knowing that he would not be alone. He

experienced God and heavenly creatures praising him and surrounding him in glory. They cried out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory" God's glory filled the temple cause the doorposts to shake the and tremble.

When was the last time you had such an encounter with God? This is not something people experience today or any day. But when we ask God to send us, we need to be ready to learn more about Him, to be willing to see and understand God. For everything changes when one is in full relationship with their Creator! Everything changes because of God's grace. When Isaiah saw the angels singing, he realized his sinfulness. But God knew this and one of the seraphim flew to him carrying a coal from the altar of God. When the coal touched Isaiah's lips, the angel stated that your guilt is taken away, your sin atoned for.

Today we do not see the visions like Isaiah because he lived and prophesied that there would be One who would come to save us. Jesus is the Son of God who came and through his death and resurrection we are forgiven. Because Jesus is the one who took away our sin. If we believe and have professed our faith, we belong to Christ and are forever changed. For when this occurs, you have eyes to see where Christ is working; a heart to feel what touches His Spirit and hands to show God's love.

But we know that there will unexpected situations arise no matter where God leads us or the tasks he wants us to do. Just think about Ananias, a disciple of Jesus living in Jerusalem. God spoke to him and told him to go to the house of Judas and see Saul of Tarsus. Ananias knew who Saul to be a persecutor of Christians, a Roman soldier whose job it was to kill people of the Way. Ananias was afraid. But God reassured him that Saul had changed because of his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. God told Ananias that Saul was now God's chosen instrument who would bring the name of God before Gentiles, kings and Israelites. So being sent by God in faith, Ananias did as he was asked. He met Saul and then he laid his hands upon his eyes so that Saul could see again. From that moment Saul's life was changed. Not only could he see physically, but he was now able to speak about Jesus as the one who changed his life. Saul was baptized, and then ate regain his strength. He had to become strong again because God had a plan for Saul. Ananias did his part to make it happen for went to where God sent him.

IF we take on the task of praying this dangerous prayer, we must expect God to call us to do something new and different. We should also trust God because he will be with us in whatever he wants us to accomplish. Are you willing really willing to be sent by God into your world? We are called and sent to be the hands and feet of Christ. Are you ready to answer God when he asks, who will I send?

Let us pray: God of grace and love, we ask so many things of you, we nw pray that in love you will call us and send us to serve you where you would have us go. Be with us O God as we share in faith and as we seek to grow in our relationship with you as your faithful followers. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.