

Sunday, June 27, 2021 Psalm 116 Luke 17:12-19

Dangerous Prayers: Disturb Me/ Thank you

What does it mean to have a 'deeper prayer life'? We are concluding our sermon series today focusing on Craig Groeschel's book Dangerous Prayers. We have been pushing ourselves into deeper prayer because we want a more intimate relationship with God. This means that it is our desire to fully 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". We need to be challenged anew right now because we are experiencing something new in the world. Life is emerging in new directions and as we have been challenged to live 'normally' these past 15-16 months we do not know what God is preparing us to do in the months to come. Maybe what God is getting us prepared for is something that will truly disturb each of us as people or as individuals we are in need of even more of a push to do something that causes us to risk a little more than what we would normally do.

Just for a moment, let us assess the content of our prayers this past week. Think about everything you prayed for recently—just in the last 7 days. Maybe you even wrote the prayers out or have them on your phone! Just what did you petition or ask God to do this last week? What did you pray about? Now if God said yes to every prayer you prayed how would the world be different? If your prayers were 'normal- safe ones' then maybe you would have had a good day, arrived safely if you travelled, enjoyed a blessed cheeseburger fries and a pop. But maybe you went a little bigger like support for a presentation you made through a zoom meeting, or finished a final summative exam or project to end school and it was great. Or maybe you were able to get the best parking spot close to where you had to go or if you bought a ticket for a draw and won. Maybe you prayed for something more—your team to win or your day to better. But just for a moment think about this situation--- God hears your voice as you state, "Dear God, or Holy God, or loving God and then you share your thoughts. Let us remember that you are speaking with God- the creator, the I Am, the alpha and omega, the all powerful, ever-present all knowing God who can send fire from heaven, speak in a whisper, calm storms, and you asked, please keep me safe and enable me to have a great day and thank you for a good lunch."

Now think about what has been happening in our world—yes we know about the pandemic, the need for vaccinations, the next stage of opening starting June 30- but what else has been happening? There have been the NHL playoff games, confusion over what people who have had two vaccinations can do, and there is talk about the weather—a Canadian favourite- but what else? Has there been anything to report changes you and what your actions might be?

I received an email this week from a church member referring to the discovery of 751 children's bodies at Marieval Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan. She states, "My heart was filled

[up] with very deep sorrow and disturb[ed] after shock[ed] by the discovery of {the} indigenous residential school tragedy. “

Disturbed and filled with sorrow. Groeschel’s dangerous prayer to offer to God is “Disturb me, Lord.” Just what does it mean to ask God to disturb us and why would anyone ask this? If you are used to getting 8 hours of sleep each night and a noise or cat/dog suddenly wakes you up this is called a disturbance. That is, what was considered a normal sleep pattern has been disrupted and you might have difficulty going to sleep again. But to ask God to disturb you will stretch and push you in a new way.

Sir Francis Drake (1540-96) was an English sea captain wrote this prayer:

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little, when we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the waters of life; having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity, and in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas, where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the horizon of our hopes; and to push back the future in strength, courage, hope and love. This we ask in the name of our Captain, who is Jesus Christ. Amen.

This is a dangerous prayer because God is being asked to break a pattern in our lives. We are called to pray with courage, to risk, to open ourselves up to a different path to a better destination. We are asked to pray with more transparency, more risk, with boldness in faith and to lead us to where He wants us to go.

In light of the Indigenous residential school tragedy which is continuing to unfold, what is disturbing us? What is it that we can do? What has been done by others? A lot of what needs to occur is to learn and listen to the stories of those who survived the residential school system and to live out an apology in faith.

There are other matters which also disturb us today as well. The ongoing grief of all the deaths of loved ones due to covid19 and the circumstances in which they died. What does this lead us to do? To listen and learn about death and life and the hope we have in Christ with the promise of the resurrection. It means listening to others who are mourning and to offer a hug, as people need to tell their stories. And it means to risk praying for support as you do these things! Disturb me, Lord. Change my routine and show me the way- your way.

Our reading from Luke 17 is the story of the 10 lepers healed by Jesus as they walked to see the priest who would enable them to be welcomed into the community. But one of the men, a Samaritan, saw that as he walked away, he was healed of this dreaded skin disease. He looked

back, praised God in a loud voice, ran and fell down at Jesus' feet. He then thanked him. Jesus commented that 10 were healed and only one returned to offer thanks. What does this mean for us as we pray dangerously?

We will experience situations in our lives which cause us pain, heartache and undue suffering from stress. We might even question if God is with us and whether praying really helps at all. We might think that praying is difficult enough but to even think about offering God dangerous prayers—why? Why would we want God to search us, break us or even send us out when it is easiest just to ask for simple things? The reason to do so is to bring about change in our lives.

One can only imagine how much these ten men suffered each day begging in the streets knowing that they would never be able to be a part of the community again. They had a disease with no cure, and their condition would only get worse and lead to death. Yet as Jesus was entering a village they called out to him by name, 'Jesus, Master have mercy on us.' Jesus didn't do anything in particular but instructed them to go to the priest so that he could welcome them back into the community. How long had they hoped for something to happen? Had they prayed to God with the hope that Jesus would come their way? How did they know about Jesus and what he could do? They disturbed Jesus and the disciples as he walked by. They interrupted the discussions of the disciples and shouted out to Jesus a prayer for hope. Jesus knew who they were, what their problems were right away and acted. As a result, they were healed. But only one returned to give thanks.

An important part of our life as faithful followers of Jesus is to give thanks to God for his many blessings and gifts to us. These men had received a new beginning for a life in community and with family. When we ask God to search, break, send and disturb us, we have to be ready to respond and act in faith because our lives will change. Are we wanting this to happen? Are we willing to go deeper into our relationship with Christ? Are we wanting God to act through us and with us? If so, we need to also offer God thanks and praise and not just one of us but all of us. When people are healed, when reconciliation occurs, when new believers are welcomed into God's family, when hope is restored- we need to say Thank You and give God the praise he so deserves.

Let us pray

God of grace and love we praise you because you call us to pray to you and you will listen. Help us to offer dangerous prayers so that we might grow in relationship with you and that you will enable us to serve you at a deeper level in faith and commitment. Show us your way O God. For it is to you that we pray as we strive to follow Jesus and grow in love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.