

Sunday, March 29, 2020
Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

**"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain,
and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.
Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit."
*(James 5: 16-18)***

Can you imagine it? God answering one man's prayer on such a large scale. The Bible tells us of the time when Elijah (a man with a nature like ours – in other words, a human being) prayed that it would not rain, and God not only granted that prayer, but he granted it in a big way: it did not rain for 3 ½ years! How come? Well, our text above answers that question. It says, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." I actually prefer the NIV translation of this verse: "The prayer of a righteous person is POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE!"

Why is the prayer of a righteous person so "powerful and effective"? What are the "magical" words or phrases that makes someone's prayer so powerful and effective? Is it a certain posture? Do I need to kneel, or fold my hands, or lift them up to heaven? Do I pray loud or long? Do I fast? Do I genuflect first?

To be blunt, none of these things makes a prayer powerful and effective. It wasn't Elijah's PRAYER that made it stop raining and then start raining again. It was God who made it stop raining and start raining again. Prayer is simply coming to God in worship first, and then with our request or supplication. God is in charge! He alone has ultimate power and authority. And He will carry out His Will with or without our prayer. And, yet, the Bible still urges us to pray.

A "righteous person" is a person who is right with God. We know that the only way to be "right with God" is through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In fact, the only Way to the Father, in prayer or otherwise, is through faith in Jesus. However, the person who is "right with God" through faith in Jesus also tends to pray for righteous things ... things that are in line with God's nature and wisdom.

I would be curious to know if there has been an increase in prayer in the past month or two? It's interesting that when our horizontal lives are threatened, we tend to pay more attention to our vertical lives. In other words, when the things of this world are threatened, people tend to pay more attention to God.

As Christians, you and I are always focused on the vertical things, the things of God. We know that our home is in heaven and that our citizenship is from there! We know that God invites us to pray, and that He promises to answer our prayer according to His Will, and based on what is best for us and our relationship with Him.

In God's time, the current global crisis will wane and possibly come to an end. But only in God's time, and in His way. In the meantime, we trust in His love for us. We remember the cross and the empty tomb. We wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as usual. And we PRAY! And, as the Bible says, "The peace of the Lord, which surpasses all human understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Confession:

O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, and bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

Absolution:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe on His name He gives power to become the children of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

Prayer for Patient Endurance:

Gracious God, I admit that I am often troubled and disheartened. Time can be heavy burden. I become weary, discouraged, and fearful. Yet I know that You are the One Who rescues me. You set the stars to move in precise rhythm, and You can also bring order to my life. To You a thousand years are but a day, and You can give me the patience to live today as a day of grace. To You one day can be as a thousand years, and You can help me to live today with the hope and patience of eternity. Give me courage and strength through Your Son, and my Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.