

Monday, June 8, 2020

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."

Colossians 4: 2

When I was a kid in grade school (I went to a Lutheran grade school) we would pray every day. We prayed at the beginning of the day. We prayed before lunch and we prayed at the end of the day. I remember always being told it's time to close our eyes and fold our hands. I know that part of the reason for doing that was to help to keep a bunch of grade-school kids from being distracted during a time of prayer.

I remember one teacher, though, who prayed with her eyes opened. How would I know that, you ask? I guess I didn't keep my eyes closed all the time during prayer. I do admit it was, and still is, a bit distracting for me to pray with my eyes open. I like to close my eyes when I pray so that I can stay focused on my conversation with God. However, based on the reading above, it seems that we are encouraged to occasionally open our eyes when we pray. Maybe not literally, but figuratively, or even spiritually. We are told to "continue steadfastly in prayer." That is, to keep on praying. Don't stop. Don't give up on it. And then it says, "being watchful in it." I take that to mean, "be aware of what is happening around you in this world."

God does not want us to be oblivious to what is happening in the world in which we live. As much as I would love to just keep my eyes closed so I can't see the pain and the violence and the sadness that goes on, I do need to keep my eyes open, even if just a little. This will inform my prayer life. I will be much wiser in what I pray about and who I pray for. When I open my eyes and look around, I become a more self-LESS pray-er. I see the needs that are around me. I see the conditions of the world and of people's lives, and I begin to pray more fervently.

We are also told to pray "with thanksgiving." We can be thankful that God is listening, and that He promises to answer our prayers in His own way and in His own time. I can pray with "thanksgiving" because I know that no matter what is going on in this world, I am His and He is mine. Jesus has made it this way by His death and resurrection.

As Christians, we are the most effective when we keep our eyes open to what the nature of life in this world is all about. Not only are we more able to pray, but we are more able to see the reason that the world needs our prayers and our message and our love. The Bible says, "we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us."

God's peace!

Pastor Jim