

Sermon Series: *“Teach Us to Pray”*—Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Westfield, IN—3/24/2002

Title: *“Praying for Another’s Salvation”*

Text: Exodus 32: 30-35

Intro.: *Ills.: What do you say when someone says to you, “I’ll pray for you.”*

Theme: Praying for another’s salvation is not some snobbish condescending activity when it is done with the heart of God through Jesus.

***Praying for another’s salvation because I know that God’s salvation love is big enough***

- Believing that another’s sin is not too great to be forgiven (*“lifted off of them”*—vs. 32)
  1. Seeing them through the heavenly Father’s eyes--not mine
    - a. **Ills.: Patience from God’s viewpoint**
    2. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16-17*
- Fulfilling your responsibility to those for whom you pray
  1. Moses first went to Israelites and brought to their attention severity of sin (*you, yourself, sinned a great sin*—vs. 30)
  2. What good does it do to pray for someone if you refuse to be used by God as an instrument of change among them
    - a. *“Suppose I tell you that wicked people will surely die, but you don’t warn them or speak out so that they can change their wicked ways in order to save their lives. Then these wicked people will die because of their sin, but I will hold you responsible for their deaths.” Ezekiel 3:18*
    - b. **Ills.: Billing Labels**
- Willing to stand in the gap for them (many times)
  1. Moses was willing to be the “scapegoat” (kippur—vs. 30 “make atonement”) for the people
    - a. **Ills.: Old Testament Celebration of Yom Kippur—scapegoat banished into desert with sins of people**
    - b. He knew that the true atonement had already taken place
    - c. He knew as he appealed to God’s mercy that neither he nor Israel would be arbitrarily blotted out of **THE BOOK**
  2. Taking on the heart of Christ toward them
    - a. *“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Mat 9: 36-38*
    - b. *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:12-13*

***Remembering what God has called me to do—not to save them but to pray for them***

- Letting God be God in doing what is just
  1. Many of Israel continued to blatantly sin against the Lord after this close encounter with destruction
    - a. Earth opened up and swallowed some, firey serpent story, plagues (vss. 34-35)
    - b. **Ills.: Our Desperation Moves God**
  2. God reminded Moses that God’s way of salvation is **individual accountability** and **personal faith** (vs. 33)
  3. Focus on the grace of God allowing you opportunity to intercede on behalf of another’s eternity
  4. Turning over the final outcome to God to execute judgment but also to show his mercy
  5. *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Ex33:19*
- Living in guilt free joy in my intercession for others
  1. **Ills.: Assuming the worst**
  2. Guilt is a trick of the devil to rob you and me of the joy of our forgiveness and salvation
  3. God does not charge me with mine or anyone else’s sins when I come to him in Jesus and through Jesus

4. "God has called us to live in peace." 1 Corinthians 7: 15

### **Patience from God's Viewpoint**

According to a traditional Hebrew story, Abraham was sitting outside his tent one evening when he saw an old man, weary from age and journey, coming toward him. Abraham rushed out, greeted him, and then invited him into his tent. There he washed the old man's feet and gave him food and drink. The old man immediately began eating without saying any prayer or blessing. So Abraham asked him, "Don't you worship God?" The old traveler replied, "I worship fire only and reverence no other god." When he heard this, Abraham became incensed, grabbed the old man by the shoulders, and threw him out of his tent into the cold night air. When the old man had departed, God called to his friend Abraham and asked where the stranger was. Abraham replied, "I forced him out because he did not worship you." God answered, "I have suffered him these eighty years although he dishonors me. Could you not endure him one night?"

### **Billing Labels**

A magazine clipping advertised a set of labels that could be used in billing customers. One of them read, "Neither of us can afford to let this account grow any older. Why not send a check today and get it off our minds?"

### **Our Desperation Moves God**

My wife and I have friends whose son, in his middle teens, rebelled against them and against God. For four years he protested the innocence of his conduct and made innumerable promises to "straighten up." But each excuse was unjustified, and each promise was broken.

So much pain, embarrassment, and discouragement had been inflicted on these parents that the wife confided to us that she did not know if she loved her son anymore. Her heart had grown hard against her own child. What melted it again was a cry of desperation.

After another escapade, followed by more protests of innocence from the son, the mother walked away. As the young man sat alone on the sofa in the family room, he began to leaf through a family photo album. The pictures of better and happier days filled him with increasing emotion. One picture struck him with greater poignancy than the rest, and he called his mother back into the room to look at it.

The photograph showed the son as a young child under the approving smile of his mother. The teen now pointed to the photo and said, "Mom, when I see this picture, I understand why you don't know if you can love me anymore. In the picture, hope fills your eyes as you look down at your little boy. But I dashed all your hopes, Mom. Please forgive me for dashing all your hopes."

And what did the mother do? Her hardness broke and she embraced him with a heart renewed in love for him. What moved her were neither protests of innocence nor fresh promises to do better. Rather, she was moved by his statement of absolute desperation. The Bible tells us that this is what moves God also. **Citation: Bryan Chapell, *Holiness by Grace***

### **Assuming the Worst**

A new pastor decided to visit the children's Sunday school. The teacher introduced him and said, "Pastor, this morning we're studying Joshua." "That's wonderful," said the new pastor, "Let's see what you're learning. Who tore down the walls of Jericho?" Little Johnny shyly raised hand and offered, "Pastor, I didn't do it." Taken aback the pastor asked, "Come on, now, who tore down the walls of Jericho?" The teacher, interrupting, said, "Pastor, little Johnny's a good boy. If he says he didn't do it, I believe he didn't do it." Flustered, the pastor went to the Sunday school director and related the story to him. The director, looking worried, explained, "Well, sir, we've had some problems with Johnny before. Let me talk to him and see what we can do." Really bothered now by the answers of the teacher and the director, the new pastor approached the deacons and related the whole story, including the responses of the teacher and the director. A white-haired gentleman thoughtfully stroked his chin and said, "Well, Pastor, I move we just take the money from the general fund to pay for the walls and leave it at that."

### **Exodus 32:30-35**

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

<sup>31</sup>So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. <sup>32</sup>But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

<sup>33</sup>The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. <sup>34</sup>Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin."

<sup>35</sup>And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.[NIV]