

Sunday Worship, May 17, 2020
Willerup United Methodist Church
Order of Worship and Notes
Pastor Marvin Singh

Welcome to Willerup Worship on the Web!

Today's Worship includes:

Praise Band –

Your Love O Lord

Your Love Awakens Me

Sermon – The Power of Prayer, Acts 12:5 (notes below)

Hymn – At the Cross, verses 1&2

(music and lyrics available at willerupumc.org, or found as #359
in the *United Methodist Hymnal*)

Sermon: The Power of Prayer
Acts 12:5 (1-17)

So Peter was kept in prison but the Church was earnestly praying to God for him.

Peter:

* he was on death row

* he was guarded by four squads of soldiers

* two guards were on each side of him

* he was hand-cuffed

* he was sleeping

* At the appointed time he was to be executed, after the festival of the Unleavened Bread, part of the Passover Festival, where multitude of Jews take part to celebrate their exodus from the slavery of Egypt. (Exodus 12:17)

BUT the Church was praying.

Praying earnestly, sincerely, consistently,

not one or two but the whole church was interceding.

It was at the house of Mary, mother of John Mark, the Upper Room gathering for the early church in Jerusalem.

Praying is the foundation of the Christian Church and JESUS founded his ministry through prayer – at the start of his ministry he fasted and prayed in the wilderness for forty days and nights, then overcame temptation with the power of prayer and the Word of God. He prayed to seek guidance to appoint the disciples. He was praying at the Garden of Gethsemane before going to the cross. Many a time he was found praying overnight.

Esther: She was the queen of Susa and spouse of King Xerxes. Her people called Jews were sentenced to death by an evil man Haman, who hated them. He convinced the King that these people were not loyal to him, therefore must be annihilated. Esther 3:12-14

Esther's relative Mordecai, who had raised Esther as a daughter, came to know of it and challenged Esther to plead / intercede for them with the King.

Mordecai to Esther: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house, you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4:12-14

We also are a Royal priesthood of believers ... 1 Peter 2:4-9

Esther mobilized fasting and prayer to the Lord for three days and nights, by the whole community of Jews. Prayer was done and the miracle happened.

Here in our context of Peter, the whole church was praying sincerely and together with only one item of prayer – release of Peter from the prison to escape from death.

God intervened, heard the cry of His people, and delivered Peter. He was sleeping, his wrists were cuffed, when the angel of the Lord woke him, his shackles fell off, he tied the laces of his sandals and took his garments and walked with the angel to the city and to the house.

Today we are locked down. The Coronavirus has infected millions of people around the world and killed so many as every day the addition of deaths and confirmed cases are increasing. People are helpless. Their money cannot buy their healing, their families cannot even visit them, everything in the world which was taking their money and time is closed. Entertainment and vacation are taken from them.

The bigger virus of sin is very much present in the world. It has taken a great toll on people too. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) But anyone who believes in Christ, shall not perish but inherit eternal life. (John 3:16) We are talking about

eternity. Christ has taken away our anxiety and death and nailed it on the cross. (Colossians 2:13-15) God is not interested that anyone perish, (2 Peter 3:9) He is offering hope and eternity to all those who receive Him. (John 1:12) He already has the “vaccine” of the Blood of Christ which cleanses us from all our sins. (1 John 1:7-9)

Greg Laurie, Senior Pastor of Harvest Christian Church, in his interview to the recent issue of the magazine *Decision* said, on closing the church services to on-line services, he preached a sermon on “God’s answer to fear and anxiety, which seemed to resonate not only with Christians being reminded of their hope but also with unbelievers who are desperately seeking.”

He further said that this is the moment which is “an open door. ... If we’re smart, we’re going to seize the moment.”

Retired Major Gen. Douglas Carver, (in the same article of the current *Decision* magazine), former chief of Army Chaplains, says, “Normally we don’t plan a crisis for 12 p. m. tomorrow. A crisis has a way of putting a person in a helpless situation where they look for some kind of relief in their time of need. Crises have a way of taking our props, removing all those things that we have leaned on ... and forcing us to see how finite we really are, that there is an eternity we can look forward to with hope through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Pastor Jim Cymbala, Pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, shares with *Decision* magazine, “God is knocking away a lot of props that we’ve had that sometimes take us away from true communion with the Lord, real closeness with the Lord.” He further said that “God might be using this unprecedented crisis to cause the church to draw nearer to Him in prayer, resulting in a sifting and purging of ‘STUFF THAT SHOULDN’T BE IN OUR LIVES OR CHURCHES.’”

Martin Luther, the great theologian once said, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”

But the church was praying earnestly to God for Peter.

The church let us realize that God has a purpose even in this crisis of pandemic, that the church should seize the moment and intercede for this sickness, death. For anxiety and fear to go and be replaced with faith in Christ who releases us from all the above and gives hope and eternity in exchange.

God is a God of miracles and he does them through prayers offered to him.

Call unto me and I will answer. Jeremiah 33:3, Psalm 17:6, Psalm 86:7, Psalm 91:15

Church, it is not two or three people, but the whole church is mandated to pray and unite in prayer, for our loved ones, neighbors, colleagues to be placed in God's hand. We need to intercede sincerely for people who need Christ now more than ever. Our prayers can penetrate the thickest of walls, our prayers can reach the hardest of hearts, our prayers can reach the well-guarded dark cells, as our God directs our prayers towards the people and performs miracles.

Please send us your prayer requests, and questions at churchoffice@willerupumc.org

Now let us pray and then listen to this beautiful hymn, "At The Cross," played by Julie Strasburg

The articles quoted in the sermon are

"The Worldwide Pandemic Is Causing People to Turn to Christ" by Jerry Pierce (quotes from Pastor Laurie and General Carver)

<https://decisionmagazine.com/the-worldwide-pandemic-is-causing-people-to-turn-to-christ/>

and "Time for Believers to Draw Near to God" by Lee Weeks (quote from Pastor Cymbala)

<https://decisionmagazine.com/time-for-believers-to-draw-near-to-god/>

both in *Decision* magazine, May 1, 2020