

Thanksgiving Eve –November 27, 2024
Text: 1 Tim 2:1-4
Theme: Thanking God for Lima Beans

Will everyone remember tomorrow to thank God for Presidents Biden and Trump? How about for Governor Pritzker and Senators Durbin and Duckworth? Will everyone remember to thank God for your parents, siblings, spouses, and children? How about for that mean coach who benched you, or that boss who is completely unfair? Will you remember to thank God for all of them?

We are good at thanking God for the people we love or admire, or for the people who are nice to us. But it is much more difficult to thank God for the people with whom we disagree, or the people whom we find it difficult to respect, particularly when they are in authority over us. But listen to what Paul tells Timothy today.

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

And don't think Paul is being cavalier with his words here. I mean if things are going great, it is easy to say pray for your rulers but when Paul wrote these words do you know who the ruler of the

known world was? One hears disparaging and disrespectful remarks about our President and our Governor, but Paul and Timothy were ruled by none other than Emperor Nero himself, the man who later set Rome on fire and blamed the Christians. You and I don't really know what it is like to be ruled by a truly evil, tyrannical ruler. Rulers who are sometimes misguided? Surely. Rulers who are incompetent? Sadly, sometimes. But rulers who are evil? No, not in my lifetime. All our rulers believe that they are doing the best thing for the people they rule. But here Paul is telling the people to pray for NERO for heaven's sake.

It reminds me of a Family Circus cartoon from years ago when Billy was leaving church on Thanksgiving Day and asked the pastor if he had to be Thankful for everything... even Lima Beans? We tend to pick and choose what we are thankful for rather than being thankful for everything in our lives. I grant you that it is much easier to be thankful for our U.S. leaders, whoever they are, than to be thankful for Kim Jong-Un or Vladimir Putin, but the directions here are to be thankful and pray for ALL rulers.

Obviously, Paul didn't think Nero was a great guy and neither would he think that about some of our U.S. leaders or some of the nefarious world leaders, but his point is that God is in control. God puts people in positions of authority over us for his own reasons and

like most things, you and I are rarely informed as to what those reasons are. But their successes or failures in their roles have nothing to do with our roles. Our role is to go before God and pray for their success, knowing that that is God's will.

I talk to people all the time who want to know how God could allow a tornado to destroy a town, or who God is sending to hell for what. I have heard preachers stand up and announce the sins for which you will go to hell and I would like to know who put them in charge of such declarations. I have heard deeply religious people explain how God sent hurricane Katrina to New Orleans to purge her of her sinful ways and I would love to know when God lets these people in on his secrets. Because the bottom line in the Bible, the only place I know for sure that God is speaking, is that he loves every single person on this planet. He wants more than anything in the world for every person to live a joyful and productive life on earth, and then be saved and to go live in paradise with him forever. EVERY SINGLE PERSON, including Nero and Vladimir Putin, and Kim Jong-Un and whatever modern-day leaders you might cast in the same light.

Here's what we know of God. He loves every one of us. We all have roles to play in life, and one of those roles is leadership and one of those roles is following. All of us have authority over other

human beings at some time in our lives. Maybe we are parents, or maybe we are babysitters in charge of children, or teachers in charge of a classroom, or bosses in charge of employees, or leaders on some kind of a team, but whenever we are in charge of other people, God has placed us in that role. God is giving us the opportunity to witness our faith in both word and action. He is giving us the opportunity to build other people up. He is giving us the opportunity to be like Jesus to other people, to show the love of God by our words and actions.

Surely, we lead well sometimes and sometimes we fail as do all human beings, but on the day of thanksgiving, we pray for all leaders at all times that they might do the absolute best job they can so that we might do the best job that we can to bring the Gospel to many through His holy Word and Sacrament, and that we may bring glory to God in whatever we are doing, saying and thinking, because this is good, and it pleases God our Savior.