

Kings and Priests

Sunday, April 24, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa
Revelation 1:6 "...and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen"

- Introduction:

People believe in prayer. Why? 282 prayer requests

When I was preparing this sermon, I looked up the record of prayer requests submitted to our prayer chains after I started keeping a record in 2015. I tried not to count messages that gave us an update about an earlier request but counted those that were new requests involving people who had been the subject of earlier requests. If I counted accurately, we had 282 requests for prayer over three prayer chains, one via the phone, one via email and one via a text messaging service. That was 282 from 2015 through 2021, averaging 47 per year, roughly 4 a month. Prayer chains like this are common in churches all over the country and in other countries. People put prayer requests on their own church's prayer chain, and then ask friends and relatives to do the same on theirs, having a prayer request sometimes go nation-wide. Thanks to social messaging systems like Facebook, prayer requests often go international. On Facebook I often see prayer requests from people that, as far as I can discern, do not regularly participate in any Christian church. Prayer, on the face of it, seems sort of silly as we address a God that we cannot experience with our five senses, at least not normally. Yet prayer is the most powerful act we can do and people all over believe in prayer. I think it is because prayer calls forth our priesthood in Christ. The verse today mentions the phrase "kings and priests", or some translations have "a kingdom and priests". For today, even though the title of this sermon is "Kings and Priests", I'd like to focus on what it means to be a priest in the Kingdom of God.

- Set the Stage:

We have been made priests because of Christ: Priests worship and pray.

Now to set the stage, John the Apostle has been sent to Patmos, a miserable rock of an island that served as a prison where the Roman Empire sent people to be worked to death in the salt mines. There John had the amazing vision that we call the Revelation and in 1:6, we read that people who follow Jesus Christ are made by Him to be "kings and priests to His God and Father." It echoes the Christian doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and it emphasizes that all who follow Christ, not some, have access to God the Father in His Name, and this access is at any time and cannot be broken or shut off. Now what priests do is they offer sacrifices, which we, happily, do not need to do. They also worship to demonstrate the honor due Almighty God and they pray for people.

- Application

Pray earnestly for one another. Prayer gives you access to the Almighty.

The application for this sermon is to appreciate the sacred nature and awesome privilege of prayer. You do it every day, probably numerous times per day so it is nothing new to you nor do you need me to recommend that you pray. But do pause to note the sacred nature and awesome privilege of prayer. The ancient Israelis gratefully worshipped God in the courtyard of the Temple, but they did not enter the Temple. That was for the priests, and the inner sanctum of the Temple, the Holy of Holies was open only for the High Priest once a year. Because of Christ, you and I, by the simple act of prayer, can march into the Holy of Holies any time you want. In fact, Almighty God wants you to come as often as you can. It is wondrous when you take the time to consider it.

Prayer is a marvelously sacred event, even in ordinary life. In fact, even life itself is marvelously sacred, and I mean common, ordinary, "go about and do chores" life. Let's consider something that Jesus demonstrates about life in John. We're going to consider it together.

Do lectio divina on John 20:19-21

What strikes me about this passage is that the Lord is sending the Apostles, as He was sent from God the Father. The chain continues in that everyone who follows Christ lives a life in which he or she is sent. Your lives have meaning, purpose, value, are part of the great tapestry of the plan of God. Your life, like your prayers, are sacred. Even the everyday part of it. Take time to consider that this week.

- Conclusion

In conclusion, I note that prayer chains are popular, and that is a good thing. They're popular because there is something about prayer that calls forth our priesthood in Christ. That priesthood, among other things, shows forth the sacred nature of prayer, and that as people sent by Christ all our prayers and all of our lives are sacred, even the everyday part. Live this week, and pray this week, with that in mind.