



## Pastor's Pen

Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. **Psalm 34:12-16**

Dear Bethel Church family and friends,

Grace to you and peace from our Glorious Triune God. I pray this finds you well and that our Gracious God is blessing you abundantly.

As we continue our study of God's **"very great and precious promises,"** the Lord laid on my heart His vow to us regarding our prayers. While there are many areas of prayer life we could focus on, I want to concentrate on this passage from Psalm 34. As you may know, this poem was written by King David to praise the Lord for personal deliverance in answer to prayer. During this period, David had fled from Saul to the Philistine city of Gath seeking refuge. While there, the son of Jesse became afraid that the King of Gath would harm him because of his previous victorious battles against the Philistines, so he pretended to be insane. It's quite an interesting story, which you can read all about in 1 Samuel 21.

What does this psalm teach us about God's response to our prayers? David reminds us that God's watchful gaze is on the righteous, not on those who choose to do evil. Not only that, but God also tells us in this passage that He listens to our prayers when we **"keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."** Interestingly, in the New Testament, the apostle Peter uses the same verses from Psalm 34 to explain why, as believers, we are called to live in harmony with one another (1 Peter 3:8-14).

Since God's ears are attentive to the prayers of the righteous, we must ask ourselves what we should be praying for as His people and as a congregation. While this isn't an exhaustive list, here are several suggestions you can add to your daily quiet time for Bethel. First, we need to be praying for the protection of our congregation, as our recent history so aptly illustrates. Friends, we do well to remember that **"our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,**

**against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"** (Eph 6:12). Sadly, many often seem hesitant to acknowledge that there is a spiritual component to the daily events we face in our lives as Christians. Yet, I'm convinced that recognizing our enemy and praying for God's protection from these forces of darkness lies at the heart of overcoming our adversary and focusing our attention and our energy on moving forward in a way that pleases Our Lord.

Just as Jesus prayed in His high priestly prayer for unity in the body because of the unity of the Trinity (John 17:21), we can also be praying for unity in our congregation. Why unity? Because we have an enemy who is obsessed with dividing us and he remains hard at work, so we must not let our guard down for a moment. Dear saints, let's remember that a church divided is one whose focus has turned inward, so we're no longer able to concentrate on our real mission, glorifying God by going to the ends of the earth to gather and grow His people. As Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, our responsibility is to **"be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace"** (Eph 4:2-3).

Finally, we need to be praying as a congregation for great discernment. We greatly need discernment because we're trying to faithfully follow God's path, which He's laid before us. Why? So that we use the gifts He's bestowed on each of us (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12) for His glory and the good of others. Yes, we need to be on our knees, asking Him to help us see our place in the Body, joyfully accept that place, and work together in love to fulfill the purpose God has for our congregation. We also need discernment as your church leadership as we seek to know how best to plan for the coming days in a world where AI threatens mass disruption. For just like the men of Issachar, we want to be those who understand the times and lead wisely, even as the community around us drifts farther and farther away from God's design. And beloved of God, we can rest confidently in the fact that since His ears are attentive to our prayers, the Lord will give us exactly what we're asking for... the wisdom and grace to accomplish the important tasks He's planned for us, even as the peace of Christ rules in our hearts and minds as His children.

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor Chris

## this week

Sunday's sermon: *Living in Christ's Church* 1 Peter 4:7-11

Youth Committee Meeting  
3/1 at 4:00 pm

Youth  
3/1 at 5:00 pm

Men of the Covenant  
3/2 at 6:30 pm

## events

Circle #1  
3/3 at 10:30 am

GriefShare  
3/3 at 1:00 pm

Diaconate Meeting  
3/3 at 7:00 pm

Men's Bible Study  
3/4 at 6:00 am

Mentors & Moms  
3/5 at 9:30 am

Men's Trap Shoot  
3/7 at 3:00 pm

## volunteer schedule

Infant Nursery  
Ilse Wallace and  
Nathalee Cuffman

Toddler Nursery  
Peggy & David Long  
and Jane McCall

Worship Training  
Cullie Mounts and  
Amanda Brummett