

“God Wants All People!”

There are three subjects mentioned in today’s Lectionary Epistle Reading. The one, which has been focused on by most folks, is **Prayer**. A second topic has to do with Jesus being the **Mediator** between God and humanity. The third important focus in the Scripture is the message **God Wants All People to be Saved**. Obviously, this third concern is closely related to the reason for the Sermon Title. However, all three of these subjects are interrelated, so let’s examine first, the one, which may be most unfamiliar to the majority of us – that is – the topic of Jesus being the Mediator between us and God.

The author of the First Letter to Timothy wrote in **verses 5-6a**, *“For there is one God, and there is one who brings God and human beings together, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself to redeem the whole human race.”* Bringing “God and human beings together” is the task of the Mediator. Frederick Buechner spoke of this role, saying, “The power that is in Jesus, and before which all other powers on earth and in heaven give way, the power that holds all things in existence from the sparrow’s eye to the farthest star, is above all else a loving power. That means we are loved even in our lostness.” Buechner concluded, “That means we are precious, every one of us, even as we pass on the street without so much as noticing each other’s faces. Every city is precious. The world is precious. Someday the precious time will be up for each of us. But the Kingdom of God is at hand. Nothing is different and everything is different. It reaches out to each of our precious hands while there’s still time.” (“The Kingdom of God” originally published in The Clown in the Belfry by Frederick Buechner.)

Buechner’s comments may sound like he was talking about God’s Agape – Self-giving and Sacrificial Love for humanity, which was manifested in Jesus Christ. If that seems the case to you, then, I submit, you have been paying attention! However, the writer of this letter chose to state God’s motivation in a slightly different fashion. The author **ended verse 6 saying**, *“That was the proof at the right time that God wants everyone to be saved”*. I underlined the emphasis on “everyone to be saved”, so we take notice of it.

Our Creator’s Purpose for the task of the Mediator is for everyone to be saved! Unfortunately, the popular understanding of what the term – “saved” means is somewhat confused and misdirected. For example, some self-identifying Christians see their confession, repentance, and cognitive acceptance of Jesus being the Son of God to be the magic formula through which they have obtained salvation – life after death.

However, the Apostle Paul clearly understood our salvation to be **God’s work through Grace – Unmerited Forgiveness – something we cannot earn**. Further, this salvation is the saving of humanity from self-destruction and bringing about Reconciliation between our Divine Parent and human beings. The Creator’s focus is to bring people back into a Faith Relationship with God – the New Relationship with God. Yet, it is God’s Purpose that not just some people, such as the Jews, be part of this New Relationship, but that All People are Invited and Welcomed into it! We find this Truth mentioned several times in today’s Scripture. Such as, in **verse 1**, *“First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people”*. Also, in **verses 3b-4**, *“God our Savior, Who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the Truth.”* This “Truth” is closely related to Jesus being the Mediator between God and humanity. God wants to bring all people into this New Relationship with our Divine Parent through God our Savior’s Agape Love – Self-giving and Sacrificial Love, which was communicated to us through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Paul explained this in **verses 5-6**, *“For there is one God, and there is one who brings God and human beings together, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself to redeem the whole human race. That was the proof at the right time that God wants everyone to be saved”*.

Let’s take a moment to closely examine that last sentence. What was the proof? Specifically, the proof was connected to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross. **His death was the ultimate demonstration of God’s Agape Love – Self-giving and Sacrificial Love to enable us to realize God has given us Grace – Unmerited Forgiveness and our Divine Parent Radically and Extravagantly Welcomes all people into the New Relationship with our Creator and one another!** Additionally, our Savior God wants All People to join in

the New Relationship – to join in living this Agape Love. The Apostle was declaring Jesus’ Death on the Cross is the Proof God wants All People to be saved – to receive the Almighty’s Grace – Unmerited Forgiveness and Radical and Extravagant Welcome into the New Relationship with our Divine Parent!

This Truth – Proof was very personal for the Apostle. Not just because he understood God had given him Grace – Unmerited Forgiveness, which he had needed, especially because he had persecuted Christ and the Church, but because of his special conversion experience on the road to Damascus and his resulting call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. At the conclusion of our Reading, **Paul explained in verse 7, “and that is why I was sent as an apostle and teacher of the Gentiles, to proclaim the message of faith and Truth. I am not lying; I am telling the Truth!”**

Given all that, what are the implications for you, me, and all people? As stated in **verse 1, “First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, requests, and thanksgivings be offered to God for all people”**. We are to pray to God for All People!

Second, as reported in **verses 3b-4, “God our Savior, Who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the Truth.”** We are to help facilitate all kinds of persons intentionally living out the New Relationship with God, which we are given through Grace and to share with everyone the Truth of God’s Agape Love – Self-giving and Sacrificial Love and Radical and Extravagant Welcome or Hospitality! **We have already been doing that through our Extravagant Hospitality toward everyone and through our sharing the Truth of God’s Agape Love and Radical and Extravagant Welcome – even, or should I say, especially through our God Is Still Speaking messages on our new Electronic Digital Sign.** Right now that message is, “No matter who you are, you are welcome here!” Watch for that slide on the sign – mention it is on your church’s sign to family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances, whoever you meet. As we change those God Is Still Speaking messages, share the new ones with those same persons. **Finally, as you live out the New Relationship with God – the New Life in Christ – live agape love, show it in your interactions with everyone.** Especially, when you observe someone is hurting! Let them know God Agape Loves them no matter who they are for God Loves and Welcome All People. **Invite the hurting person to come experience and learn the Truth of God’s Agape Love and Radical and Extravagant Welcome here with us!** Amen.