

“Together in Prayer”-Daniel 6:4-11, John 17:20-21, Acts 1:12-15

There was a billboard that showed a little girl sitting on her father’s shoulders waving an American flag. The caption read, “What makes us great-Unity pass it on.” Since 9/11 the caption, “United We Stand”, has been the theme we want to show a united country.

The night before he died Jesus pulled his disciples together and taught them a lot. One of which was a prayer for unity. In John 17:1-5 Jesus prayed for himself. In verses 6-19 Jesus prays for his disciples. Then in verse 20-26 he prays for all of those people who would become believers beyond his death and would be the foundation of a dynamic and growing church. By the way that is you and me.

Over the next five weeks we are going to look at five characteristics or areas that united the early church. These are areas that made the church strong in their witness and influence on society. The five areas are: united in prayer, united in priorities, united in patience, united in possessions, and finally united in praise. I also want us to look at these 5 characteristics and see where we as the church find ourselves in each of these areas. So this morning we look at being together in prayer.

In the first two chapters of Acts Jesus had gone back to be with the father and the disciples were to go back to Jerusalem to the upper room and wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. As they waited the Bible tells us that they were joined together in constant prayer.

The disciples knew that prayer brought about unity. The early church learned a very powerful secret in the early days of their existence. The secret was the power of prayer. Through prayer God would prepare them for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Through prayer God would take them beyond the Day of Pentecost into months and years of getting the church off the ground and to become a very powerful force in society.

In the world we live in with a great deal of uncertainty we need to be people of prayer. We need to be a church that is centered in prayer. I want us to

look at a biblical character that discovered the deep satisfaction, power, and transformation for his life and the lives of those around him because he was intentional in prayer. This character was Daniel.

Daniel lived 500 years before Christ in the Persian Empire. Daniel was appointed by Cyrus the king to the role of commissioner to help him to rule the vast Empire. Daniel was very good at his job as commissioner because he possessed an extraordinary spirit. So much so that Darius who followed Cyrus as king wanted to appoint Daniel as the number two man in the Kingdom. You know what happens next. When one finds success, integrity, and honor in life, especially through ones deep relationship with God, jealousy sets in. Those who worked with Daniel and saw how he got promoted and they didn't turned on him, planted seeds of doubt and mistrust with Darius. So much so that Darius comes up with an edict that if anyone is caught praying or worshipping to a god or a man other than the king will be put in the lion's den.

Daniel was backed into a corner because his prayer life and relationship with God was the most important thing he had. So what was he to do? What would you have done? Was Daniel intimidated by the edict? Did this edict change his relationship with God? In verse 10 of chapter 6 the Bible says, "Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house and he continued to do what he had always done: kneeling on his knees three times a day praying and giving thanks to God as was his custom." Daniel stepped out in faith and demonstrated that his relationship with God through prayer was more important and significant than his fear of what the king could do to him.

So what can we learn from Daniel and his prayer life that will help us to be more effective in our prayer life? First of all, we discover that Daniel was faithful and regular in his prayer time. The Bible tells us that Daniel had a "custom" that included regular prayer. Daniel prayed regularly like clock-work three times a day on his knees. No matter what else was going on, nothing kept Daniel from his prayers including the edict from the king himself.

Second of all, Daniel was persistent in his prayers. What did Daniel do when the edict came down that no one could pray for thirty days? Daniel remained

persistent and committed in his prayers. Daniel's prayer time was not going to be interrupted by anyone or anything. His prayer time was a priority no matter what. Even the fear of being thrown into the lion's den could not keep Daniel from praying.

Third of all, Daniel trusted God to answer his prayers and do the best for Daniel. Later in Chapter 6 when the accusers found Daniel on his knees in spite of the edict and turned him in, Darius who liked and respected Daniel had no choice but to throw him into the lion's den. So Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. Darius challenges him as he is thrown into the pit, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you." The King went back to his home but spent the whole night not eating or sleeping because he liked Daniel so much. The next morning the king hurried to the den. He called out to Daniel but he knew it was probably of no use. But he called out anyway. "Daniel, did your God whom you serve continually and faithfully saved you?" Daniel joyfully answered, "My God sent his angel who closed the mouths of the lions." The king was so overjoyed that his next degree was to order everyone to worship Daniel's God." Faith and trust are the key ingredients in an effective prayer life. A faithful prayer life leads others to God like it did King Darius.

As I think about our individual lives and I think about our church I have to ask the question, "How effective is our prayer life?" How seriously are we committed to pray for our church and pray for its ministry? Do we honestly believe that God answers prayer? For each of us is our prayer life deep and meaningful or is it merely a rote exercise? Do we really pray for people when we tell them we are? Do we really pray about it when we say we are going to pray? Or do we forget about it.

Peace Church along with other churches is made up of wonderful people, but are we suffering from prayer anemia. This church needs more than ever to be faithfully prayed for. There are many outside forces and some within that are fighting the church to do its ministry and to be God's witness. We will always be put to the test in providing quality and creative ministry and programming. But it has to start with intentional prayer on the part of everyone. The strength of the

early church came as a result of people taking ministry seriously and knowing that God is in the center of it all. So the early church came together in faithful and trusting prayer and God did the rest. Can we be like the early church and allow God to make a difference in what we do and who we are? It can and needs to start with prayer. I invite us to be in prayer not only for one another but also for the church.