

August 23, 2009: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18; Psalm 34:15-22; **Ephesians 6:10-20**; **John 6:56-69**

Prayer on the phone – I was at home working on the computer putting together a newsletter article when the phone rang. I assumed it was someone from church, but instead, I heard the voice of my aunt L. on the phone. Aunt L. was undergoing treatments for cancer and didn't live near any other family. Periodically, when she was having a hard day, or was in pain, she'd call someone to hear their voice and be reassured. Most times she had a neighbor who would check on her and pray with her, but she had recently left to see some family. My aunt wasn't sure who she could contact in the early afternoon, so she called me. Of course, she said she didn't want to bother me, but it was no bother at all. She was experiencing some pain and she asked me to just talk for awhile. I told her how we were doing and told her some funny stories about the boys – there are always funny stories with two toddlers around – and then she asked if I would say a prayer for her. So, right over the phone, I prayed a prayer. I am not sure how long we talked, but at a certain point, my aunt said that she felt better and probably should let me go. It's amazing how connected you can be through prayer – even over the phone.

“Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.” (Ephesians 6:18a)

Prayer in the middle of the mall – I went to the mall in search of a skirt to wear for my trip to Cameroon; I wasn't expecting to come home with a skirt and a prayer. I was told that I should wear modest skirts while in Cameroon because that's what most women wore – they wouldn't be wearing shorts or slacks. It was my first time at the Rapid City mall and I saw a kiosk in the center of the mall selling wrap-around skirts that could be reversible, as well as worn in many other ways. I thought this was a good idea because I wanted to pack lightly for the November trip. As I looked through the skirts and tried one on with the help of the woman working the kiosk, she asked if I was buying the skirt for something in particular. I told her about my trip to Cameroon with the Lutheran church, getting to celebrate at the installation of the Bishop and meeting seminary students. Before I left, she asked if she could pray for me, the rest of the group and our ministry partners in Cameroon. With a surprised and thankful heart, I said, “yes.” There, in the middle of the mall, she prayed for me.

“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” (John 6:63b)

Facebook prayer -- I received a message via Facebook from a friend asking if I would say a prayer for her and her husband and their recent pregnancy. That was it, but I said a prayer for them. Periodically, I would receive short updates via Facebook and continue to lift them up in prayer. Short and simple, yet so essential.

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Your phone rings. You receive an e-mail or text message. You bump into a friend at the grocery store. Along with me, you have stories of prayers that happen in the everyday. We even begin each worship service on Sunday by asking if there are any other prayers to include in our intercessions. And, when we get to that time in worship, you are invited to add prayers either silently or out loud. Prayer surrounds us. It comes in the small moments of life when we pray for patience and it comes in the big moments when we hear of stories of genocide on the other side of the world. Our hearts turn to prayer.

These are prayer examples from the everyday. The ordinary. The daily moments in our lives that affect us greatly. And yet, in light of these daily prayer examples, what do they have to do with the armor of God shared in the book of Ephesians? How do our daily prayers fight against the “wiles of the devil and darkness”?

Ephesians names our sense of the struggle in the world as a community of faith. From the seemingly small and personal struggles to the greater evils in the world. Prayer in the everyday and in the ordinary connects us w/God’s power as well as w/the community of believers.

Prayer is sometimes called the 7th piece of armor joining truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the word of God. Prayer is not something that can be separated out b/c it clothes all that we do as it connects us to the power of God. We clothe ourselves in prayer as a reminder that power belongs to God and the evils of this world, small and great, do not have the last word. Prayer reminds us that we are not alone and that there is hope.

We pray together in the ordinary, in the everyday and build upon God’s power that not only overcomes the ordinary, but the extraordinary. We pray together out loud and silently because we need to be reminded that through God we receive spirit and life.

God’s power draws us to pray. God’s power draws us to believe. God’s power draws us to proclaim, along w/Simon Peter in the gospel of John (when others draw away from Christ in doubt and in fear): “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69)

Prayer powers the proclamation of the gospel.

Sermon Helps: Workingpreacher.org; RevGalBlog; *Ephesians 4-6* of *The Anchor Bible* series, ed. Markus Barth; and *The Deutero-Pauline Letters of Proclamation Series*, ed. Gerhard Krodel.