



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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“BROKEN ARROW” (How to Pray Series)

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We continue our series on prayer, and today I want to talk on the kind of prayer that is called intercession or intercessory prayer. What is intercession?

Intercession is basically praying for others. You are interceding for others and praying not so much for yourself but for others.

This may not sound like a big thing – but I fear that though many of us like praying, we like praying for ourselves. We pray mostly for ourselves and not for others. I think we would pray more for others if we really understood the power of prayer. It makes a huge difference!

Sometimes we don't make the time to pray for others because we are lazy or apathetic or don't think intercessory prayer works. We can think, “God is going to do what He is wants to do anyway, so why pray?”

Let's be clear on what intercessory prayer is. So let me kick it off and by the end of this sermon you would've heard not only from me but also from Liam Neeson, Mel Gibson, Oswald Chambers, and hopefully God. But if you are NOT compelled to pray for others by then, well, then I will pray and intercede for you. So buckle up for this rocket ride, and I begin by reading to you a passage from Oswald Chambers.

Oswald Chambers was a great Scottish preacher of the late 1800's, early 1900's who taught not only in the United Kingdom but also in America, Japan, and Egypt. He wrote the great devotional *My*

Utmost for His Highest. Here's how he explained the depths of Intercession:

“You cannot truly intercede through prayer if you do not believe in the reality of redemption. Instead, you will simply be turning intercession into useless sympathy for others, which will serve only to increase the contentment they have for remaining out of touch with God.

“True intercession involves bringing the person, or the circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God, until you are changed by His attitude toward that person or circumstance.

“Intercession means to “fill up...[with] what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” ([Colossians 1:24](#)), and this is precisely why there are so few intercessors.

*“People describe intercession by saying, “It is putting yourself in someone else's place.” That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God's place; it is having His mind, His perspective.” (from *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers)*

So this is the power of intercession! Praying for someone with GOD'S MIND, His perspective, and, if I dare say, in His power! Okay, I will pray with God's mind for others. But for some of us, we have these hurdles about praying for others.

One hurdle is that we don't think God cares. We think He doesn't care about our or other people's life situations. He's

like the absentee father. He will not get involved. In fact, we are not sure if He really cares enough to intercede.

Actually, the whole Christian faith is about God coming to earth to INTERCEDE for us. That is why Jesus went to the cross. That is why God the Father sent His son to save us.

For some of us, we might have had a difficult time with our father, and, hence, we think of God as like an earthly father—imperfect, maybe mean, not caring, aloof even if we are in trouble.

But that is not the story of God our heavenly father. God is a forgiving father. God is the father who WILL intervene and WILL intercede if we are in trouble, when we call upon His name. If we have not had a good father as a model for God, we need to perhaps change that bad image to instead see a protective God who will do ANYTHING to help us, TO INTERCEDE, like the father played by Liam Neeson in the movie *Taken*, when he discovers that his daughter has been kidnapped. Yeah, that's the picture we should have. Vengeance is the Lord's. He talks to the kidnappers and says this. (Video clip was shown.)

Yowza! That's our Heavenly Father! When we have GOD as our heavenly father, when there are people who want to do harm to us, when we need help, we need to see God as one who desires to protect us. He has a special set of skills. He can call down the angels. He can create heartache for our enemies.

He can blow up cities like Sodom and Gomorrah. He can make the walls of Jericho fall down. He can make a path of escape for us through the Red Sea. He can kill the Goliaths who threaten us. He is the Almighty God.

He is, as we have sung *the Lion and the Lamb*, who sacrificed His life for us. He's roaring with power and fighting our battles. And we sing that recurring line: Who can stop the Lord Almighty? Who can stop the Lord Almighty? Who can stop the Lord Almighty?

So when we pray for others, we have to know that a loving heavenly Father will bring all that He has to help whoever we are praying for. Intercession is powerful!

When I am in trouble, it is so helpful to know that I have intercessors praying for me. I have committed friends who pray for me, some who pray for me every single day.

When I am really in trouble, or when your friends are in trouble, you need to know that Intercession is so important, that it is as if the alarm goes out of Broken Arrow. What is broken arrow?

There are several meanings to the phrase broken arrow, and they are all urgent. But the one I want to talk about is when a military unit is completely surrounded and about to be over run by enemy troops, and the call goes out, "Broken arrow, broken arrow!" It means if there are ANY units in the area, ANY air support, "Help! Come to our aid right now because we are in imminent danger of being wiped out!"

In the movie *We Are Soldiers*, Mel Gibson plays a leader of his unit in Vietnam who is about to be overwhelmed by the Viet Cong and so he gives out a call for help. (Video clip was shown.)

When we pray for people, when we are doing intercession, it is not some wimpy thing we are doing of just praying. No, we

are in essence praying to God, "Broken arrow! Broken arrow!"

We are praying, "Lord, I say Broken Arrow for my friends. Rain down Your healing power and love. Intercede! Please send every angel, come Holy Spirit come! Please send Your power to help these people. I am interceding for them!" It is as if we are on a walkie-talkie of prayer yelling, "Broken arrow, broken arrow" pleading, requesting, asking for God's grace and mercy and healing.

Sometimes men, and I do mean men, think prayer is women's work. Most church prayer teams are filled with a majority of women. Is that because most men cannot imagine prayer as being that important or active? But intercession is a critically important spiritually muscular act for the follower of Jesus, calling down the power of God. Surveying a scene and calling in heavenly air support.

If we don't pray for our friends, our president, our country, our state, God will not act. What does it say in the Bible?

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, THEN I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2Chronicles 7:14)

Look at that verse. I capitalized the word, "IF" and "THEN." God responds IF we are humble enough to pray. THEN He will hear us from Heaven. THEN He will forgive our sin. THEN He will heal our land. But we have to start off with intercessory prayer.

But you might think, "Really, Dan? I am just one person. Does my one prayer really count?" I say yes. Yes! If one person prays for another person...if one person prays for the city, if one person prays for healing, it makes a huge difference.

Remember in the Old Testament, God was going to destroy the city of Sodom because of its wickedness, but Abraham, INTERCEDED for Sodom and pleaded with God. He prayed to God to save the city of Sodom.

Here's the dialogue as recorded in the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, in The Message translation:

Gen. 18:22 The men set out for Sodom, but Abraham stood in God's path, blocking His way.

Gen. 18:23 Abraham confronted God, "Are you serious? Are you planning on getting rid of the good people right along with the bad?"

Gen. 18:24 What if there are fifty decent people left in the city; will you lump the good with the bad and get rid of the lot?

Gen. 18:25 Wouldn't you spare the city for the sake of those fifty innocents? I can't believe you'd do that, kill off the good and the bad alike as if there were no difference between them. Doesn't the Judge of all the Earth judge with justice?"

Gen. 18:26 GOD said, "If I find fifty decent people in the city of Sodom, I'll spare the place just for them."

Gen. 18:27 Abraham came back, "Do I, a mere mortal made from a handful of dirt, dare open my mouth again to my Master?"

Gen. 18:28 What if the fifty fall short by five—would you destroy the city because of those missing five?" God said, "I won't destroy it if there are forty-five."

Gen. 18:29 Abraham spoke up again, "What if you only find forty?" God said, "Neither will I destroy it if for forty."

Gen. 18:30 Then Abraham said, "Master, don't be irritated with me, but what if only thirty are found?" "No, I won't do it if I find thirty."

Gen. 18:31 He pushed on, "I know I'm trying your patience, Master, but how about for twenty?" "I won't destroy it for twenty."

Gen. 18:32 Abraham wouldn't quit, "Don't get angry, Master—this is the last time. What if you only come up with ten?" "For the sake of only ten, I won't destroy the city."

Gen. 18:33 When GOD finished talking with Abraham, he left. And Abraham went home.

That's intercession, Abraham pleading for a city, hoping they would turn from their wicked ways. But they did not, and in the end, there were not even ten people who would turn towards God, and so ultimately the city of Sodom was done for.

But Abraham interceded and God listened. God listens to our prayers, Even if it is one person praying. And yes, when we intercede it may not always go how we want it to, but intercession is not seeing God as an ATM machine. It is approaching a situation with His mind. He will know what is best in the end even if our human minds can't figure it out.

Here is what James, the brother of Jesus, wrote as recorded in the Bible:

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of A righteous PERSON is powerful and effective." (James 5:16)

The prayer of just ONE person in right relation with God is powerful and effective! There are many prayers we may say. And we may say many only for our selves, but we have to be in the habit of praying for others – intercession has got to be part of our prayer portfolio...and it has to be a big part. Don't always be praying for yourself.

I am grateful and sustained by those who pray for me and so I must pray for others.

I pray for you all in this church constantly. It says in the Bible:

Pray in the Spirit AT ALL TIMES and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers FOR ALL BELIEVERS everywhere. Eph. 6:18

Remember I spoke of the significance of Dunkirk last year. It was our metaphor for our Acts 1:8 Capital Campaign, which ends this month (and if you haven't finished your pledge, eh, no forget!). We are trying to raise \$1.8 million. I said last year, everyone, yes, everyone needs to help with a sacrificial gift to pay off the debt of this building and to prepare for future expansion of our building and its needs.

Dunkirk, which is the name of a movie playing right now is about how 400,000 primarily British and also French and Dutch troops during World War II were trapped on the French shores of Dunkirk by the Nazis and were about to be slaughtered unless someone saved them.

Large Navy boats could not get close enough on shore because they were so heavy. So British Prime Minister Winston Churchill asked civilians to sail the English Channel with whatever boat they might have and go to Dunkirk to bring back to England as many soldiers that they could.

Here's a clip of the trailer to the movie *Dunkirk* showing now. (Video clip was shown.)

"I'll be useful sir," said the boy. And so they were. And if you can believe it, more than 800 boats answered the call. That was in essence a British Broken Arrow distress call. Churchill called them the "Little Ships of Dunkirk."

Here is a picture I took last month in the London Imperial War Museum of the smallest surviving "Little Ship of Dunkirk." You can see how tiny it was, but everyone got into action. The fishing boat was named "Tamzine." It has a

plaque attesting to its authenticity when it was used in 1940.

The allied armies were about to be overrun so everybody had to help – those with sailing boats, speedboats, motorized lifeboats, yachts, merchant marine craft, ferries, or little fishing boats. In the end 338-thousand men were saved. Had they died on Dunkirk, England would not have had an army to stop the Nazi's and they would have lost the war to an invasion.

Everyone had to help. Every possible civilian had to answer the call. And like our prayers today, every prayer counts. Every civilian has to pray to intercede to save others.

Another hurdle that we may have that prevents us from interceding for others is that we might not think prayer has that much power. Or the Holy Spirit doesn't have that much power. Maybe you don't really believe in miracles. Maybe you don't believe that prayer can bring about miracles in physical, emotional healing. Or maybe you think Jesus had the miraculous power back then and the apostles did too but not us today. For Holy Spirit is not that powerful today. That, my friends, is problematic.

Let me try something. And listen to me closely so I am not misquoted. Let's say for illustration, purely FOR ILLUSTRATION, that I decided right now to ask you to all hold hands, bow your heads, and then I say a prayer to Satan asking that there might be evil put on all of you and your loved ones; that he might put an evil curse on you from this day forward. If I did that many of you would shriek and shirk in horror and say, "Pastor Dan what are you doing? No, don't do that! That would be horrible! That would have a tremendous effect on our lives! A curse on us?"

Why would people think Satan has so much power today and yet don't give that kind of confidence or respect to the impact and power of the Holy Spirit?

If I say, we are going to have a healing service next Sunday at 2pm, which we are, some might say, "Oh yeah fine, that's great, nothing will happen, pray all you want, but nothing is going to happen. I don't believe in miracles or miraculous healing. So big deal. I'm not coming. Why pray for friends when prayers like that may or may not work?"

But if I say, then I am going to curse your loved ones and ask Satan to create heartache in your lives, many would react stronger to that THAN if I would say, "I am going to pray for you with the power of the Holy Spirit that you might get healed or helped right now." Some would be more nonchalant on that, as opposed to if I called down evil on you and your families right now. Why is that?

The power of the Holy Spirit is real. It's greater than Satan's. The love of God is greater than the evil in this world. And when we have a healing service like we will next Sunday at 2pm, people WILL GET HEALED because God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit show up.

When I or the prayer team says from up here that we believe someone has an issue and God wants them to stand up for prayers of intercession, that's for real. Believe in the Holy Spirit and in His power that will come upon immediately on that person.

When we intercede for others it is incredibly powerful. Please, please make intercession part of your prayer life. And by the way, intercession is for all ages. You are not too old or too young not to pray.

As you know I just came back from a Christian conference in England. There were times that I was moved to tears when adults would come forward or stand up where they were seated for prayer in the main session because they needed prayer or encouragement. And people around them would pray for them.

One night I saw something even more tear-provoking: a little kid around 10

years of age placed his hand in prayer on one adult standing in one group and with the other hand placing his hand on a teenager standing in another group. And there he stood in the gap praying fervently, staring into the air with a serious face and faith. You could tell he was praying with all of his might.

I hope there will come a time when children and youth will be with us in a service. And when we have prayer for healing or for help, they will stand with us and pray for one another.

During the conference, I was trying to be discreet but I did sneak a few pictures at the end of a service when people were being prayed for. Here's a picture of a 12-year old kid (I know he was 12 cause I asked him) who might be the same kid I saw in an earlier service with his hands praying on two people. In this service, he is just outside one of the prayer groups looking at his friend in there who needs prayer.

People were asked to stand if they had a prayer request, and then people gathered around that person to pray. You see him there on the left with the circle on him? It's like I want to get in on it. And then in this next photo, we see the kid REACHING IN to be part of the action because he knows it is important to pray; he wants to pray; he wants to intercede and that his intercession will count.

That's what I hope for our church; that we always WANT to be in on the action of praying for other people! Not afraid to reach out or reach in and pray either in person or from afar because we believe in the power of intercession! So right now, as this is a series on how to pray, I want us to practice intercession, and do it right now and go into some ministry time during this service.

As you know there are many broken hearts today as we have heard the sorrow of the passing of Wanda Smith as well as the passing of Jenny Sung's husband. Maybe you have a different

prayer need right now. Maybe you have a lost a loved one and would like prayer. Maybe you are facing an illness, a disease or injury or ailment and need healing. Maybe you have a loved one, a relative or friend in desperate need. Or there are some here who have been rejected by someone and being here today it has been really hard to even concentrate during the sermon. The burden of the strife, rejection, estrangement because of a conflict with someone is heavy on your mind.

If you have any of those things I mentioned or some other burden, I am going to ask you to stand right now for prayer. I am going to ask you to be bold and courageous and we want to pray for you right now. Please stand and believe that intercession really works as we pray a prayer of broken arrow over you as we sing this last song.

In addition, for those who are sitting near those who are standing up, can you now stand and pray for that person, asking permission to either put a hand on a shoulder or just a hand near them but not touching. Let that person wanting prayer say what they prefer.

You don't need to ask what the request is; we'll keep it confidential, but just pray silently interceding. The praying people, pray silently; don't say a word but just let the Holy Spirit minister to them. It's the Holy Spirit who will do the work.

And those who are not near those people, you can sing or stretch out your hand to someone near you from where you are sitting as we sing and/or pray for these people. And at some point those who are receiving prayer can sit down AFTER the song or when they want to DURING the song after receiving the prayer that they desire.

Let us intercede for our brothers and sisters now, and I will begin with a prayer as the band comes up and then you all continue to pray for them as we sing.