

“PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden

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Texts for the Sermon: Acts 1:12-14, 21-26; Luke 6:12-26

Luke 6:12-16 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

The apostles had a problem, a big problem, they needed to replace Judas. What did they do about the problem? Complain, wring their hands, talk to each other, do nothing?

The path they chose was to glorify God by looking to Him for the answer. And one way to glorify God is to magnify Him. There are two ways to magnify something. What is the difference between a *microscope* and a *telescope*?

A microscope or a magnifying glass looks at really small things and makes them appear bigger than they really are. A telescope looks at things that look small, but are really huge, and brings them closer. It makes things that seem small and insignificant begin to look as big as they really are.

So when David says, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Psalm 34:3-5) he is not saying he wants to make a small God look bigger than He is. He is saying he want to make a big God begin to look as big as He really is.

Most of us are pretty good at using a magnifying glass or a microscope. We hold them over our problems and make our problems seem bigger than they really are. We magnify our worries, fears, doubts, inadequacies, stresses, busyness, and in so doing we diminish God.

We need to change what instrument we are using.

Prayer is one of God’s best gifts for reducing trials, troubles, knocking difficulties down to size and for magnifying the greatness and goodness and power of God. Prayer puts us in a position to see God for who He really is, to cause them to appear as great as He really is.

When we pray we magnify the *power of God* to work for us in any situation or circumstance. Prayer reveals that nothing is too hard or too impossible for God.

Jeremiah 32:27 Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?

Luke 1:37 For nothing will be impossible with God.

Isaiah 64:4 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts [works] for those who wait for him.

Prayer magnifies the *wealth of God* as the source of every blessing. God delights to put on display the riches of His glory. It shows not just how rich He is but how generous a giver He is. Givers are more glorious than receivers. Benefactors are more glorious than beneficiaries.

Philippians 4:19 My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Prayer magnifies the mercy, kindness, and love of God toward sinners.

Prayer magnifies God as the all-wise, *all-sufficient God* who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and controls all creation, who makes out of nothing, and who wants to be depended on.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but ... let your requests be made known to God” (Philip 4:6). “Cast all your anxieties on him” (1 Peter 5:7).

This invitation takes on tremendous power when we see God’s glory is at stake.

Magnifying God helps put everything else in perspective. To have God’s perspective is to have a God’s eye view of reality.

When we have an incomplete view of who God is we worry about our prayers being answered or whether or not God is in control.

John 14:13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Never forget that God does everything for his own name’s sake — that is, for his glory. He does everything for his glory. He delivers us for his name’s sake (Psalm 79:9). He blots out our transgressions for his own sake (Isaiah 43:25). He leads us

in paths of righteousness for his name's sake (Psalm 23:3). He does not forsake his people for his great name's sake (1 Samuel 12:22). He saves us for his name's sake (Psalm 106:8).

Why did Jesus pray all night? Jesus prayed all night because the enemy and opposition were great, because in His human flesh He depended on God, and because the matter at hand was that serious with far reaching and long reaching implications. The future of the church He came to establish on earth depended on the selection of the right men. He wanted to do the Father's will and He asked His Father to guide Him in that will.

The decisions made that night were the most important of any organization or business or church ever made. Leadership matters more than anything else.

Clearly every decision doesn't need an all-nighter. But there are matters of huge consequence in our lives and in the lives of our family or church or nation that merit considerable time in prayer. The election of our church leaders merits our attention and devoting a worship service to it.

There was one other reason why Jesus spent all night in prayer before selecting the twelve. It was not for His sake but for our sake, to give us an example and to impress on us that some things are weighty and must have our prayerful attention.

The disciples have learned from their Master, they are imitating Him here. Jesus set apart time to pray before selecting the apostles and now the apostles are praying before selecting a replacement for Judas.

Choosing pastors and elders and deacons, spiritual leaders calls for prayer. It is easy for us to see the list of names and know some of them better than others, we might have our favorites, but we don't know the hearts, and we don't know what is ahead in our church and who would serve us best, who has the best gifts or experience for what lies ahead.

Jesus shows us how much He loves the church by His earnest and careful prayer. And so we show our love for our church by our careful devotion to prayer for her leaders.

If He who was God and full of the Holy Spirit prayed like this, how much more must we?

[This section below and the prayer are from the past five meditations.]

God has ordained in Scripture that certain men be set apart as elders and deacons for the good order of the church and for the spiritual leading and caring of the souls of the flock.

He means for us to decide. No angels, no handwriting on the wall, but prayerful dependence.

Scripture teaches the method for deciding is twofold (see Acts 1:21-26). *First*, by prayerfully seeking His will. Prayer is at the heart of every passage that deals with the choosing of leaders.

And *second*, by exercising godly discernment in choosing only men who know Jesus, who have a relationship with Christ and are living a life that reflects it and are living a life dependent on Him. Leaders who know Christ and follow Christ will inspire faith and trust in their followers.

Nothing is more important to the life and health and future of this church than the choosing of godly leadership. A flock must have faithful shepherds.

As we prepare to vote to set apart men for elder and deacon, we must pray. And let's add a rider to our prayer and pray for an associate pastor.

That's why I have called us to prayer tonight. This is the most important decision facing us as a church this year. Please pray and fast and pray some more and continue in steadfast and earnest prayer all this week.

Prayer: Holy Father, lead us by your Holy Spirit to have your mind and heart in this most important matter. For the sake of the flock, please hear and answer. For the sake of the witness of your church in this community please hear and answer. For the sake of your glory and honor and for the sake of the glory and honor of Jesus Christ and His church, please hear and answer. We ask for your will to be done on earth and in your church and in this church as it is in heaven. We ask you to choose and set apart those who are most fit to serve in these offices at this time in your church. This is our earnest prayer. Have mercy on us and help us we pray, in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.