

GIVE GOD A HAND

(1 Timothy 2:1-8)

Intro: I have a favor to ask of you this morning.
-I'm wondering if each of you could give God a hand.

I'm not asking that you give me a hand.
-Although, Lord knows, I could use it.
-I'm asking you to give God a hand.

Usually when we are invited to give someone a hand.

-We can mean a number of different things.

#Applause.

*How about a hand for our worship leaders this morning?

*But that's what our whole worship services are.

+Giving God:

=Our thanks.

=Our praise.

=Our applause.

-For all that God has done.

-For all that God continues to do.

*That's not what I'm asking.

#Help.

*Could you give us a hand around the church?

*That request will be coming in October.

+As part of our stewardship campaign.

+You will receive a Time and Talent Survey.

*That's not what I'm asking—today.

#Pray.

*"I desire, then, that in every place the people should pray,
lifting up holy hands without anger or argument."

+1 Timothy 2:8.

*That's what I'm asking.

+Give God our hands.

+Lifting up our hands in prayer.

- I. There Is No Single "Right" Posture For Prayer.
 - A. In The Scriptures.
 1. Some stand.
 2. Some kneel.
 3. Some lie face down.
 - a. To pray.
 - b. There is no single "right" posture for prayer.
 4. Some bow their heads.
 5. Some raise their eyes.
 - a. To pray.
 - b. There is no single "right" posture for prayer.
 6. Some fold their hands.
 7. Some raise their hands.
 - a. To pray.
 - b. There is no single "right" posture for prayer.
 - B. When I Lead The Prayers At Communion.
 1. I raise my arms.
 2. I open my hands.
 - a. Symbolizing that when we pray.
 - We come to God with open hands.
 - We come to God with empty hands.
 - #Ready to receive what God has to give.
 - b. We give God our hands in prayer.
 - C. Writer Of Timothy Encourages Us To Pray.
 1. Lifting up holy hands.
 - a. Without anger or argument.
 - b. 1 Timothy 2:8.
 2. Do you know why the practice of shaking hands began?
 - a. It was a gesture of peace and good will.
 - b. It was a way of saying:
 - “Look, there is no weapon in my hand.”
 - c. Other party reciprocated.
 - “Look, there is no weapon in my hand, either.”
 3. Do you know why at a wedding?
 - a. Bride stands on the left.
 - b. Groom stands on the right.
 - Groom is able to give his left arm to his bride.
 - He keeps his sword-hand free.
 4. We are to pray with holy hands.
 - a. Empty of anger and hostility.
 - b. Hands that can be instruments of peace.

5. I have told you about Mark Allen Powell's book Giving to God.
 - a. Mark Allen Powell.
 - Professor of New Testament.
 - Trinity Lutheran Seminary.
 - Columbus, Ohio.
 - b. His book is about:
 - Living a generous life.
 - c. He tells a story about the Gauls.
 - Warlike people who lived in what is today:
 - #France.
 - #Belgium.
 - Missionaries came to Gaul.
 - #In time some of those Gallic warriors.
 - *Were brought to faith.
 - *Were baptized.
 - #But those warriors had a custom.
 - *When they were baptized.
 - *They kept one arm raised above the waters.
 - +While the rest of their body was immersed.
 - #This seemed a peculiar practice to the missionaries.
 - *Until the next battle or skirmish broke out.
 - *Then the warriors would:
 - +Proclaim:
 - = "This arm is not baptized."
 - +Grab their:
 - = Club.
 - = Ax.
 - = Sword.
 - Go off to war.
 - = In a most un-Christian manner.
 - d. Powell tells this story to suggest that it's our:
 - Pocketbooks.
 - Checkbooks.
 - #That we want to keep dry.
 - *Out of the baptismal waters.
 - *Away from God.
 - e. I tell this story to suggest:
 - Our hands are to be holy.
 - Our hands represent all of what we bring to God.
 - #In peace.
 - #In prayer.

II. For Whom Should We Pray?

A. Let Me Tell You A Story.

1. When I lived in St. Louis.
 - a. I regularly attended:
 - Lutheran Professional Church Workers' Conference.
 - b. I was even the chairperson of that group.
 - For a couple of years.
 - c. There were usually about 40 of us in attendance.
2. We met monthly.
 - a. For worship.
 - b. For a program of some kind.
 - c. For lunch.
 - We covered all the important things.
3. In our worship services.
 - a. During the prayers.
 - b. It was not unusual for the worship leader.
 - To invite us to offer our own petitions.
 - #As I do at our 8:30 service.
 - c. Most of my colleagues who were parish pastors.
 - Might name some of their parishioners.
 - d. I, as a chaplain, would sometimes offer a more general petition.
 - For issues related to:
 - #Health care.
 - #Criminal justice system.
4. One particular day.
 - a. Worship leader invited us to offer our own petitions.
 - Some did.
 - I did not.
 - #At least not out loud.
 - b. After the service.
 - Former seminary professor of mine.
 - #Asked me if one of the petitions had been mine.
 - I said:
 - #"No, not today."
 - #"Because if I had."
 - *"We would still be in there praying."
 - *"I would still be naming names."
 - He said:
 - #"You've got a good point there."
 - #"For whom do we not pray?"

- B. Timothy Is Urged To Pray For Everyone.
1. "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone."
 - a. 1 Timothy 2:1.
 - b. That sounds easy enough, doesn't it?
 - Until we start getting down to specifics.
 - #The devil is in the details.
 - *As they say.
 - c. It's not so hard to pray:
 - For ourselves.
 - For our loved ones.
 - For our church family.
 - d. We may even be moved to pray:
 - For our community.
 - For our world.
 - #That it be a better place.
 2. But for whom is Timothy specifically told to pray?
 - a. "For kings and for all who are in authority."
 - 1 Timothy 2:2a.
 - b. This is not the same as our praying:
 - For the President of the United States.
 - For Ron Peters and the Oklahoma Legislature.
 - #Which are good things for us to do.
 - c. At the time the two epistles to Timothy were written.
 - Christian Church.
 - #Small minority.
 - #Living in:
 - *Pagan world.
 - *Roman culture.
 - Roman emperor.
 - #Often imposed his rule against the will of the people.
 - #Enforced that rule with the presence of his military.
 - #Sucked the tax money out of local communities.
 - #Persecuted those who did not recognize him as:
 - *"King of kings."
 - *"Lord of lords."
 - It is for such a one that Timothy is encouraged to pray.
 - #It would be like:
 - *Us praying for Osama bin Laden.
 - *Sunni and Shiite Iraqis praying for President Bush.
 - Timothy is to pray for kings and those in authority.
 - #Not for their overthrow.
 - #Not even for their conversion per se.
 - *But for the sake of peace.

-If those in authority are using their authority in a Godly way."
#There will be peace.

3. We are to lift up holy hands.
 - a. "So that we can live a quiet and peaceable life."
 - b. "In all godliness and dignity."
 4. Our 5x5x5 small groups have a couple of goals.
 - a. To read Scripture.
 - b. To pray.
 - With and for each other.
 - For the ministry of this congregation.
 - For the mission of the larger church.
- #We lift up our holy hands.
*On behalf of all for whom Christ died.

III. Our Prayers Are To Be As All-Inclusive As God's Salvation.

A. Jesus Lifted Up His Holy Hands.

1. He opened his hands.
 - a. To the nails.
 - b. To the suffering.
 - c. To the dying.
2. He opened his hands.
 - a. Because he wanted all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4)
 - b. Because he was offering himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6).
3. He opened his hands.
 - a. On Good Friday.
 - b. On Easter morning.
4. He opened his hands.
 - a. With the gift of love.
 - b. With the gift of forgiveness.
 - c. With the gift of mercy
 - c. With the gift of salvation.
5. He opened his hands for all.

B. We Lift Up Our Holy Hands.

1. We lift them up.
 - a. Filled with:
 - Our hurts.
 - Our joys.
 - Our cares.
 - Our concerns.

- b. For:
 - Ourselves.
 - All for whom Christ died.
 - #If Jesus didn't die for them.
 - #You don't have to be concerned with praying for them.
- 2. We lift our holy hands and we empty them.
 - a. Giving our cares to God.
 - b. Commending everyone to God's continuing care.
- 3. Then our hands are open to receive what God has to offer.
 - a. Faith.
 - Forgiveness.
 - b. Hope.
 - Healing.
 - c. Comfort.
 - Mercy.
 - d. Love.
 - Salvation.

Concl: When you come to this altar.

- Give God a hand.
 - #Give God two.
- Lift up your holy hands.
 - #Open.
 - #Empty.
- They will be filled.

