

“This is my wish for you: Comfort on difficult days, smiles when sadness intrudes, rainbows to follow the clouds, laughter to kiss your lips, sunsets to warm your heart, hugs when spirits sag, beauty for your eyes to see, friendships to brighten your being, faith so that you can believe, confidence for when you doubt, courage to know yourself, patience to accept the truth, love to complete your life.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

“My wish for you, is that life becomes all that you want it to. Your dreams stay big, your worries stay small. You never need to carry more than you can hold. And while you’re out there gettin’ where you’re gettin’ to. I hope you know somebody loves you and wants the same things too.”

-Rascal Flatts

“I wish you the courage to be warm when the world would prefer that you be cool. I wish you success sufficient to your needs; I wish you failure to temper that success. I wish you joy in all your days; I wish you sadness so that you may better measure joy. I wish you gladness to overbalance your grief. I wish you humor and a twinkle in your eye. I wish you glory and the strength to bear its burdens. I wish you sunshine on your path and health to carry you on your journey. I wish you peace- in the world in which you live and in the smallest corner of your heart where truth is kept. I wish you faith- to help define your living and your life. More I cannot wish you- except perhaps love- to make all the rest worthwhile.”

-Robert A. Ward

I appreciate these quotes and the sincerity of each wish within. I wish all of these things for each of you, each of us, today and every day. However, here is my question. Is wishing the same as praying? Would these quotes mean anything different if they began, “This is my prayer for you...”, “My prayer for you is...”, “I pray you...”? When we wish upon a star, are we also praying to God? Maybe we are. Then again, maybe not.

I have come to believe there is a difference. A wish, I think, carries an element of fantasy, question, or doubt with it, almost like it would be nice to have but I am not 100% confident what I am wishing for can actually come to pass. Almost like a comment rolling off the tongue with no emotion or conviction. My wish for you is that you are able to have your cake and eat it too. Not sure if it is realistic but it sure would be nice wouldn't it. I mean,

who wouldn't want never-ending cake to both have available and consume at the same time 😊? Besides, who are wishes made to and counted on for fulfillment? Chance? Self-Will?

Prayer, however, is more intentional and more hopeful. *“Prayer requires more of the heart than of the tongue (Adam Clarke).”* Prayer is offered in faith and trust and confidence in God, who is able to fulfill our deepest desires according to God's will. When we pray to God, we are letting God know that we want to be in relationship with God, not simply because we want God to give us something, but because we believe God knows what is best for us and will provide for us accordingly in the right time. When we pray to God, we are lifting God's abilities and understandings up, lowering our own abilities and understandings, and surrendering ourselves in humility to God's love and care.

In our scripture reading today, verse 7 reads **“And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety (cast all your prayers) on him, because he cares for you.”** What Peter is saying here is that we must humble ourselves- our lives, our requests, our desires- in prayer to God. And when we do, we will be exulted and know of God's care.

This is my prayer for you. That is right, I pray to God for you. I pray to God for us as Christ's church. I pray to God... you are assured of God's love and care. We read it in God's word, “Our Lord is steadfast” and “God's love endures forever.” We read about God caring for the Israelites in the wilderness with food and guidance and the promise of a land all their own, and God caring for the disciples, teaching, healing, loving, and empowering. We read about God bringing deliverance, redemption, and salvation to all who believe. And today in 1 Peter 5:10-11, we read, **“And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever.”** I pray you not only know this intellectually about God because you have read it, but that you are assured of God's love and care for you because you feel it and experience it throughout your life.

A voyaging ship was wrecked during a storm at sea and only two of the men on it were able to swim to a small, desert like island. The two survivors who have been good friends, not knowing what else to do, agreed that they had no other recourse but to pray to God. However, to find out whose prayer was more powerful, they agreed to divide the territory between them and stay on opposite sides of the island. The first thing they prayed for was food. The next morning, the first man saw a fruit-bearing tree on his side of the land, and he was able to eat its fruit. The other man's

parcel of land remained barren. After a week, the first man was lonely, and he decided to pray for a wife. The next day, another ship was wrecked, and the only survivor was a woman who swam to his side of the land. On the other side of the island, there was nothing. Soon, the first man prayed for a house, clothes, more food. The next day, like magic, all of these were given to him. However, the second man still had nothing. Finally, the first man prayed for a ship, so that he and his wife could leave the island. In the morning, he found a ship docked at his side of the island. The first man boarded the ship with his wife and decided to leave the second man on the island. He considered the other man unworthy to receive God's blessings, since none of his prayers had been answered. As the ship was about to leave, the first man heard a voice from heaven booming, "Why are you leaving your companion on the island?" "My blessings are mine alone, since I was the one who prayed for them," the first man answered. "His prayers were all unanswered and so he does not deserve anything." "You are mistaken!" the voice rebuked him. "He had only one prayer, which I answered. If not for that, you would not have received any of my blessings." "Tell me," the first man asked the voice, "What did he pray for that I should owe him anything?" "He prayed that all your prayers be answered."

"If you want to find out how much someone loves you, find out how much they pray for you."

-J. C. Ryle

"And as it turns out, if one person is praying for you, buckle up. Things can happen."

-Anne Lamott

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

-Alfred Lord Tennyson

Ok, so the next time there is something important we need, let's not simply wish upon a flitter flutter, let's have faith and trust and pray to God- for others, with others!

Let all God's people say... Amen.