

Dangerous Prayers Msg 3 – Use Me
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
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**** Video Rollin (Christmas Vacation Saying Grace)**

Some of the prayers we pray, are prayed on auto-pilot

They are prayers we pray them without really thinking.

A lot of the prayers we pray are way too safe.

We're in the third week of a series in which we're thinking about some different types of prayers.

Prayers that aren't safe. Prayers that aren't predictable. Prayers that ARE dangerous.

Week One we looked at the prayer, **"Search me God, know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there's any offensive way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting."**

Last Week we talked about a very dangerous prayer where we prayed together, *"Change me God."*

Change anything in me that keeps me from being what you want me to be.

Today we're looking at what may be the most dangerous prayers so far.

It's the prayer of availability.

It's the prayer in which I ask God to . . ." Use Me"

Let me share with you an observation.

Every week many of you turn in prayer requests, and we love it when you do.

We've got a team full of people who love to pray over your prayer requests, but here's what I've noticed, just from observation.

What I've noticed is that most of the time what people request prayers for are the things that directly impact them or those that they love.

It's, *"God, would you do this for me?"*

God, would you heal my grandma?

Would you help me get into this school?

God, would you help me find a job?

Would you bless me as I do such and such?"

Absolutely and completely we should continue to pray those prayers; but instead of just praying,

"God, would you do this for me?", a dangerous way to pray is, *"God, what can I do for you?"*

Instead of praying, *"God would you please bless the things I'm doing"*

What if we prayed, *"God would you help me to do the things that you desire to bless."*

The prayer we're looking at this week is The Prayer of Availability.

And it's A Dangerous Prayer.

When you pray this prayer, God could direct you in a lot of different ways.

He may lead you to go to a different city.

He may reveal a calling in your life that you never ever expected before.

He may lead you to stay somewhere when you just knew you were supposed to go somewhere else.

He may move you to break up with somebody.

He might lead you to a different job.

He might call you to serve somewhere.

I don't know what it would be, but when you make yourself available to God it's an incredibly dangerous prayer.

Now, all throughout scripture if you read from the Old Testament through the New, you're going to see that God calls people.

What does that mean?

It doesn't mean your phone rings,

What it does mean is that he speaks to people, he prompts them, he moves them, he leads them to say something, to do something, to go somewhere, to encourage someone, to speak truth.

God will call those who know him to do something that he wants done.

There are different responses to God's call.

I want to talk about . . . Three Responses To God's Call

The first one, if you're taking notes, is this.

It was Jonah.

The Old Testament prophet Jonah

He responded to God's call this way.

He said . . .

1. Jonah: Here I Am, I'm Not Going

Some of you can relate. *"Here I am God.*

I hear ya God,

But I'm not going."

Jonah chapter 1 verses 1 through 3

The Word of the Lord came to Jonah saying . . .

"Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."

How did Jonah respond to God's call?

But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. . ."

Jonah 1:2-3

I wonder how many of you have had a similar experience. You've felt prompted to do something.

"Hey, I'm supposed to reach out.

I'm supposed to say something.

I'm supposed to help this person.

Here I am God. But Not today. I'm not going."

I can guarantee you that all of you who are followers of Jesus, there are those times that God prompts you to do something and you think, *"I need to. I ought to. Nevertheless, I'm not going to do this."*

That was Jonah, *"Here I am . . . I'm not going."*

The second one is Moses, and this is what Moses said. He said,

2. Moses: Here I Am, Send Someone Else

Moses actually said, *"Send my brother!"*

"My brother Aaron would be a much better choice."

Verse 10 of Exodus chapter 3, God said to Moses . . .

"Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt."

Instead of saying, if this is your assignment, then I'll gladly accept it, what Moses actually said was . . .

"Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?"

Exodus 3:10-11

Who am I? I'm not good enough.

I'm not talented enough. I'm not an eloquent speaker. Someone else would be better at this than I am.

Here I am, God. Send someone else. I'm not the right person."

It's so easy for us to do this.

"I'm not going to give. They should give. They've got more money to give.

I'm not going to go. I don't have as much time. She's a stay at home mom. She's got more time than I do."

"She can do it. He can do it. They're better equipped. I don't have time for this. Here I am God. Send someone else."

Jonah says, *"Here I am. I'm not going."*

Moses says, *"Here I am. Send somebody else."*

Contrast that to the response of Isaiah. . .

3. Isaiah: Here I Am, Send Me

Isaiah 6:8 says . . .

"Then I heard the Lord asking, 'Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?'"

Stop there for a moment

I want you to think for a moment about what Isaiah didn't say in response to God's call

Notice he didn't say, "Where are you sending me?"

Is the climate nice?

What's the cost of living there?

What is the pay range?

Are there benefits?

How much vacation do I get?"

How's the WiFi?

He didn't ask for any of that.

What he simply did, essentially, is signed a contract that was blank and said to God, "Here I am," somebody say it aloud,

***I said, 'Here I am. Send me.'*” Isaiah 6:8**

That response from Isaiah is a dangerous prayer.

I want to encourage you this week . . .

And it's one of the NEXT STEPS on your notes. . .

To make this prayer a part of your daily prayer life

Try it, just for a week.

When you wake up, essentially “*God, here I am. Send me.*”

I want to challenge you, dare you, motivate you to pray a similar prayer.

"Here I am God. I'm available.

Here I am God. You have permission to interrupt me.

God, if you want me to go somewhere, I'll go.

If you want me to stay, I'll stay.

If you want me to say something to somebody, I'll speak.

If you want me simply to be quiet and pray, I will pray.

If you want me to give something away, if you want me to use my time, whatever you need me to do, wherever it is God, here I am.

I am completely available to you God.

I am your servant. Here I am God. Send me."

An incredibly dangerous prayer, because when you start praying that I guarantee you God's going to interrupt you, God will prompt you, God will move upon you, and suddenly you'll recognize God has a lot for you to do when you pray, "*Here I am. Send me.*"

How do we get there?

How do we get to that kind of attitude before God?

How do we fully surrender our lives to God?

I want to try to answer that.

We looked at Isaiah 6:8.

I want to look at the verses that lead up to that surrendered prayer from the prophet Isaiah.

What Do You Need In Order To Be Used By God?

Three things, if you're taking notes I hope you'll write these things down.

Number one, you need

1. An Encounter with the Presence of God

Verse 1 says this . . .

"It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord.

Isaiah had a vision

He saw the Lord.

What did he see?

He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple." Isaiah 6:1

What happened?

Isaiah saw the presence of God.

He saw him in all of his majesty and all of his glory.

The text goes on to talk about these angelic beings named seraphim, and all of these angelic beings were worshiping and praising the living God crying out, "***Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.***"

When Isaiah saw the presence of God, when he experienced the glory of God, it completely transformed who he was.

Why is it that you might not be very available to God?

Perhaps it's because you have not recently experienced the presence of God.

Why is it that maybe you're not as available to God as you should be?

Maybe it's because you haven't sought after him in awhile, because when you experience his presence you will be transformed.

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His glory was everywhere. . .

. . . the train of his robe filled the Temple

What do you need in order to fully surrender to God?

You need An Encounter With The Presence Of God.

The second thing you need is

2. An Awareness of my own Sinfulness

In fact, I would suggest to you that one of the biggest cultural lies that people believe today is this: *"I'm a good person. You're a good person.*

She's a good person. We're good people."

Let me tell you this, without Christ you are not a good person.

You are a horrible, pathetic, evil sinner in the eyes of God.

Welcome to ERBC, where we're here to make you feel better about yourself.

Let me say it again, just to make sure you don't miss it

You are wicked.

I'm wicked.

We're evil.

We're sinners.

We're despicable in the eyes of God.

It was when Isaiah saw the goodness of God he realized the badness of him.

He saw how holy God was, and in that moment he recognized his own unrighteousness.

It was a genuine awareness of his sinfulness.

In verse 5 he cries out,

"Woe is me, for I am ruined!

Other versions say, "I'm undone.

Why??

He tells us

Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:5

Having an encounter with the presence of God . . .

Having become aware of the fact that God is HOLY and you are a sinner, is the beginning of getting to a place where you can be used by God.

But it doesn't stop there.

If that's all you see. . . .

If all you see is how HOLY God is, and how SINFUL you are, then you'll stay right where Isaiah was

You'll stay in a place of total defeat, and depression and despair.

Woe is me!

I'm ruined!

I'm undone!

I'm TOAST

There's a third thing you need and it's this. . .

3. An Understanding of God's Grace

It's the realization that left to ourselves we are at the bottom of a hole we cannot dig ourselves out of,

But with God's help, everything changes.

Look at verse 6

"Then one of the seraphim

The seraphim were angelic beings . . .

flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, 'See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.'" Isaiah 6:6-7

There's a lot of imagery in this vision.

But what happens is that Isaiah sees an angelic being touch his lips with a burning coal.

Why?

Because that signified the burning away of his sins.

God removes the guilt and forgives our sins.

This was why Jesus Christ left heaven and came to earth and went to a cross and died.

He did it so that He could remove our guilt and forgive our sins.

That burning coal serves as a reminder of what God can do for every single person who will turn to Him.

Have you ever stopped to consider how much sin God may have to forgive in your life?

Your lying lips?

Forgiven!

Your lustful attitudes?

Forgiven!

Your self-centered thoughts?

Forgiven!

Your angry outbursts?

Forgiven!

Every secret sin you've never told anybody before, but God knows them all?

Forgiven as if they never ever happened.

God separates your sins from you, as far as the east is from the west.

He does not remember your sins anymore.

When you confess your sins to God, he is faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

When you become aware of how great your sin is you quickly realize that you are in desperate need of a God who is greater than those sins.

A God who can remove your guilt and forgive you for all of eternity.

There may be some of you here this morning and you've never really considered how much sin there may be in your life

And I get that, because if you haven't had an encounter with the presence of God, how would you even know?

But I believe that the people who are most likely to pray this prayer like Isaiah did are the people who live with an awareness of their sin and an understanding of His grace.

If that's where you're at, then you won't be afraid to pray this dangerous prayer, which BTW is also our MEMORY VERSE for this week.

"Then I heard the Lord asking, 'Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?'"

And Isaiah said. . .

'Here I am. Send me.'" ***Isaiah 6:8***

It's the prayer of SURRENDER

Send me wherever you want me to go, to do whatever you want me to do.

Why are we afraid to pray this prayer?

We're afraid, because we're afraid of where God might send us.

What if I pray this prayer and he sends me to AFRICA?

Do you know what?

He might.

We have a team going to Africa next year

And it's possible that God is calling you to be a part of that team.

(Pastor Andrew, Daniel Ayala, Jerry Gewe)

And if not Africa, then what about . . .

The Philippines?

We have two missionary couples. . .

Paul & Margie Varberg, Tim & Bethany Spears serving there

(Joel or Marissa or Rodrigo)

If not the Philippines, or Africa, then what about . . .

Nicaragua

(Rosa, Hugo, Marie)

And if for some reason, none of those work for you, then join us at . . .

The ROSE BOWL in two weeks
 It's just a two hour investment of your time
 Sign up using your CC today!

But . . . if the idea of a trip overseas or even across town scares you, then . . .

One thing that I do not want you to miss, when it comes to Isaiah's encounter with God is that God was not asking Isaiah to go someplace else.

He was asking Isaiah to go back to the very people in the very place He had already put him.
 He wanted to use him there!

This week I saw a story of a man from a past Global Leadership Summit.

It's a story of a man who was willing to surrender his life and be used by God

A man who was willing to go where God wanted him to go and do what God wanted him to do.

He answered God's call,

And what God told him, is I believe what he will very often tell you and me, and that is, that *I want to use you right where you are* .

I want to use you with the people I've already given you.

Now this man was in the military, so that presented some unique challenges.

His situation is not your situation.

There were rules about what he could and couldn't do

What he could and couldn't say.

And yet God called him to love just a little bit more

And to lead a little bit more like God would lead

And to serve and care for the people that God had entrusted to him.

I want you to watch the story of Mark and imagine how this could apply to where God has placed you right now. . .

G.L.S. Clip 3:56

What I love about that story is that Mark took it seriously to "be sent" right to the very place where God had already placed him.

God didn't ask him to sell everything he owned and **move to a third world country.**

He could have.

He didn't ask him to quit the military and become a pastor.

He could have.

Praying "God Use Me" didn't mean that he had to do anything WEIRD, he just had to do something MORE with what God had already given him.

In the military he couldn't preach that one religion, but do you know what he could do?

He could be the very best at what he was doing, and leverage that as an opportunity to tell others about what it was that was motivating him to do that.

Solomon, writing in the book of Ecclesiastes says it this way . . .

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" Ecclesiastes 9:10

Don't miss those words. . .

"Whatever your hand finds to do,

Whatever your hand finds to do . . . whether it's your dream job or not.

Whatever God has given you to do, you ought to do it with enthusiasm.

Do it with enthusiasm AS IF Jesus Christ was watching and AS IF you were working for him.

Because as a Christian, he is and you are.

Six months before he was assassinated, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr spoke to a group of students at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia on October 26, 1967.

As part of his "What Is Your Life's Blueprint?" speech he shared the tale of the street sweeper.

I want to share with you a little bit of what he said. . .

"And when you discover what you will be in your life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it.

Don't just set out to do a good job. Set out to do such a good job that the living, the dead or the unborn couldn't do it any better.

If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music,

Sweep streets like Leontyne Price sings before the Metropolitan Opera.

Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry.

Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.

I would challenge you to take those words to heart and apply them in your own context.

Maybe in your workplace, you could have a conversation with your supervisor.

And if this is too scary for you to do on your own . . .

You can tell them that your pastor gave you this as an assignment . . .

Try to get a time to meet with your supervisor, and ask them this question . . .

Ask them, *“What would have to change in order for me to become and A+ employee when it comes to my job?”*

You could tell them, *“I know that I’m an adequate employee. Because I’m sure that if I weren’t you would have let me go a long time ago.*

But what I’m asking you is, what would it look like for me to be an A+ employee?

What would it look like for me to become an employee who was not just doing a GOOD job, but was doing SUCH A GOOD job that I was hitting it out of the park.

You could tell your supervisor. . .

I know you have supervised a lot of workers over the years, and so you’ve got a lot of experience to draw from.

Are there things right now that I AM doing, that you wish I would stop doing

Or things I’m NOT doing, that you wish I’d start doing, that would cause you to rate me as not just a GOOD employee, but as one of the best employees that you’ve ever had?

Now be prepared . . .

If you’ve never had that kind of a conversation with your supervisor, that might floor them.

You might want to lay out the question, and then give them the option to think about it for a while before getting back to you with their answer.

Also a word of warning . . .

Don’t ask the question, if you’re not serious about really wanting an answer.

The only thing worse than feeling like you can’t meet your boss’s expectations because you’re not sure what they are, is finding out exactly what those expectations are and then figuring, I really don’t care enough to work hard enough to meet those expectations.

Hopefully that’s not going to be any of us. . .

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people.” Colossians 3:23

Don’t miss those words. . .

Whatever you do . . .

Mechanic . . . Truck Driver . . . Engineer . . . Stay at home mom or dad . . . doctor . . . dentist . . . student

Whatever it is you do, and wherever it is you do it, realize that God has given you a unique set of people and circumstances and he is looking around saying, *“Who am I going to send to bring this message of hope and love to these people.*

You may not think you have enough ability . . .

But understand this . . .

The Greatest Ability God is Looking for . . .

Is our AVAILABILITY

God is not going to wait for the talented to become available.

He’s going to use whatever abilities you might have if you are simply willing to be used.

So who is it that God wants to send you to?

There are people in your life right now who need what only God can provide.

They need to know that there is a God who loves them.

And it may be that God has placed you where you are, in proximity to them, so that He can use you to reach them.

There’s only one way to find out.

Are you willing to pray this dangerous prayer. . .

“Here am I, send me”

“Here am I, use me”

Would you pray with me?