

## The Lord's Prayer [John 17](#)

When I say that we will study the Lord's prayer I am sure most people immediately think we are about to look at the prayer that starts like this:

Our Father, who art in heaven...

That should be called the Disciples' prayer, because it was the prayer Jesus taught the disciples after they asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray."

The disciples could have asked Jesus for anything – teach us to heal, or teach us to cast out demons, or teach us to walk on water or turn water into wine. But the thing they want to know more than anything else was how to pray. They could see how important prayer was to Jesus – he started his ministry in prayer, he continued in prayer, even praying all night at times, and the last words he would speak from the cross was a prayer, "Into your hands I commit my spirit..."

Here in John 17 we have the longest recorded prayer of Jesus. This is holy ground. We are listening in to Jesus speak to the Heavenly Father, listening in to his prayer. I almost feel like we should take our shoes off this morning as we read this passage...

This prayer naturally divides into three parts – Jesus prays for himself, Jesus prays for his disciples, Jesus prays for us!

Let us look at this prayer and see what the Holy Spirit has for the church today....

### **Jesus Prays for Himself – John 17:1-5**

Verse 1 describes the posture of Jesus as he prays. Remember last week we talked about postures of prayer that express our humility before God: bowing, kneeling, even prostrating ourselves before God. But notice how Jesus prays: he lifts his head and looks up into heaven. He is about to have a conversation with the Father, so he lifts his eyes up as if to look him eye to eye. He may even have lifted his hands – it does not say...

And one more note: he must have prayed out loud. Why do I say that? Because his disciples heard him, and recorded what they heard. Have you ever prayed out loud? Not just when you are in a group, but when you are by yourself? Ever pray out loud to Jesus as you drive the car, or take a walk, or sit in the living room? Yes, people may notice and think you are cuckoo, but who cares? I see people apparently talking to themselves all the time – then I see the ear buds!

If you are like me, I can be easily distracted when praying. When I pray out loud I am able to focus so much better. Try it...

Well, we have Jesus literally hours before he faces the cross, which did not come as a surprise to him, but as the destination for which his whole life was headed. What would Jesus pray for himself so close to the agony of the cross? I know what I would pray for – a way out. But not Jesus...

The "hour has come" is Jesus way of saying the time to die is upon him. Jesus also referred to his death as "his glory", and now he prays that what will happen next – the betrayal, the trials,

the crucifixion and the burial, followed by the resurrection – would bring glory to the Father and to the Son.

These verses ooze with relationship. Jesus is speaking to the Father as one speaks to their closest friend. But why not? Jesus communed with the Father continually. He constantly sought the will of the Father, talking to him in every situation.

And notice what Jesus says he came to do – grant eternal life to those the Father gave him (v.2). First, do you hear what Jesus is saying? You are a gift from the Father to Jesus. Those who have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ belong to the Heavenly Father, and the Father gives us to the Son!

Ever hear someone say, “Who do you think you are? God’s gift to the world?” Sure you have. But if someone says that to you your response should be, “No, I am not God’s gift to the world, but I am God’s gift to Jesus!” How amazing, and humbling, is that? You are God’s gift to His Son when you turned your life over to him.

And note what Jesus grants all those who are given to him by the Father – eternal life. This is not just life without end. Eternal life is the kind of life we live now. It is the abundant life Jesus speaks of in John 10:10. It is a life that is radically different from the life the people who do not know Jesus live. It is a God centered, God filled and God directed life.

And with Jesus’ work complete, “I have finished the work you gave me to do,” (v. 4) what does Jesus ask? He wants to come home. “Give me the glory I had in your presence from the beginning.” After all was said and done, Jesus was ready to go home. Can you blame him? And that hope of going “home” is the gift Jesus gives to all of us... “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go ... I will come again and take you to be where I am...” If Jesus longed to go home, and he knew what heaven was really like, how much more should we long to go home as well?

### **Jesus Prays for his Disciples – John 17:6-19**

As Jesus speaks of the disciples, that gift the Father has given to him, he says he has given a gift to the disciples. According to verse 8, what is it? His words. They have believed with certainty that Jesus is who he said he was, the Son of God sent from the Father. So now they take the words Jesus gave them and they share those words with others. How do I know? Because we are reading those words today. The Gospels are the words Jesus gave the disciples. The epistles, or letters, written by Peter, James, John and Paul are Jesus’ words given to his disciples. And those words have been shared with us. These are God breathed words, inspired words that bring life.

But Jesus is not done yet. He goes on to say that he prays for the disciples. Can you imagine Jesus praying for you?

A preacher told of a day when Billy Graham came and paid him a visit. Before the preacher got up to preach that day, Billy Graham asked if he could pray for him. Gratefully the preacher received that prayer and in his mind he was thinking, “This is going to be an awesome sermon, and an incredible service because Billy Graham prayed for me!”

Now imagine what would happen if Jesus prayed for you! And that is exactly what Jesus says he is doing for the disciples in verse 9. No wonder they moved in such power and authority – Jesus was praying for them!

Then Jesus prays for their protection. He was returning to heaven but the disciples must fight the battle here on earth a little longer. So Jesus prays for the protection of his disciples.

Wait a minute, you might say. Were not all the disciples martyred? Peter was crucified upside-down in Rome. Andrew was crucified, and Thomas was killed by spears. Matthew was stabbed to death, while Bartholomew was flayed and beheaded. Philip was tortured to death, James killed with the sword. The other James was stoned to death. Jude was hacked to death while Simon the Zealot was sawed in half. Were they really protected?

But note what Jesus says: none were lost, but Judas (the son of perdition or the one doomed to destruction). There is something far more important than losing your life, and that is losing your faith – losing your soul. Jesus said that as he prayed the faith of the disciples was protected no matter what they faced.

Jesus knows how important this prayer was, for as he says in verse 14, the world has hated those who carried the words of Jesus to the world. To this day people do not want to hear what God says, but instead want to hear what science says, or the philosophers, or the psychiatrists, or the politicians, or worse, the celebrities! But those who hold up the Bible and declare the Word of God will be hated.

Jesus says that he does not pray for them to be taken out of the world, placed on a nice safe shelf somewhere, protected from all the pain and suffering of this world. No, instead he prays this one thing for the disciples – that they would be protected from the evil one. That would be Satan. Jesus prays that his followers would not be deceived by the one whose mother tongue is lies. Jesus did not pray for a chariot to whisk us out of harms way, but for armour to stand strong in the battle.

I heard an interesting story about codfish. When they first were introduced on the menus of restaurants, the challenge was how to serve the fish so it still tasted fresh and the meat firm. At first they thought they could freeze the fish and send it, but the meat was spoiled. It did not freeze well. So they tried sending the fish in tanks of water all across the United States to the restaurants. But this also did not work, for the meat was mushy. Finally, they decided to send the fish in tanks of water that also contained a catfish, the natural predator of the codfish. The codfish spent the whole journey from ocean to restaurant swimming, avoiding the catfish, and guess what? The cod tasted great when it got to the restaurant!

Jesus could have removed us from the world and all its troubles but that would not be good for our faith. Some have tried to be in the world but not in the Word, and they have been spoiled by the world. Some have tried to be Christians who are in the Word, but not in the world, isolating themselves, but they become mushy in their faith. Jesus said his followers would be in the world and in the Word and then they would be strong – they would be the tasty codfish!

These healthy, strong disciples who have been prepared for life in the world are sent to share the faith. They are to be like salt that will preserve a rotting world, or like light that shows the way in a world filled with darkness and despair. The life of the Christian is incomplete until it is one that is shared with a world that needs to know the love of God demonstrated on the cross of Christ! Jesus' disciples are sent into the world.

### **Jesus Prays for Us – John 17:20-26**

It is hard to believe, but Jesus prays for us as well. We are the ones who came to believe because we heard the words of Jesus through the disciples.

What does Jesus pray for us? Above all else, that we would be one! We would learn to love each other in such a way that the world would notice and want what we have. It is not about all thinking alike – that is uniformity and that will never happen. As the saying goes, if two people think exactly alike on everything one of them is not thinking!

But we are united in this: we believe Jesus is the Son of God, God come in the flesh to be our Saviour, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried and on the third day rose bodily from the grave. We believe salvation is found in none other but Jesus, and some day he will come again to take us home. We believe that until that day Jesus is with us through the Holy Spirit to empower us for his service. We are united in this...

That we are united in love for Jesus will be a witness to the world. Through us may the glory of Jesus be seen in a world that often misses the fact that there is a God. Jesus concludes by saying the love the Father has for him has been poured into the lives of us, his children today, and as we learn to walk in that love, and express that love in real and meaningful ways, we will give glory back to Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

What a great prayer. Jesus prayed for himself, for the disciples and for us. I see an ever-widening pattern that starts with me and my needs, my family and then the broader circle of my city, Province or world. It reminds us of Jesus words to the disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit and be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The circle with God only gets bigger and bigger. May our prayers be like that, starting with our relationship to God, then praying for our family and expanding to embrace our world.

And hold onto this: you are saved today because Jesus prayed for you! Jesus is still praying – interceding – for the lost. Will we join Him?