

"Jesus' Prayer"
John 17:1-26
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About 4 years ago, I took a trip to Israel. If there's any way you can make this trip, please do. It's a life-changing trip. It's a beautiful country – the Bible absolutely comes alive there. The trip I went on was with Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa. The way this trip went was we would get on tour busses and go to 2 to 3 stops each day – typically places of historical Biblical significance.

One of my favorite places we went to was the church of the Mt. of Beatitudes located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. If you are blessed to have been to Israel or go to Israel, you'll see the Catholic church erected churches on many of the sites that were notable places of Jesus' ministry – the church of the Mt. of Beatitudes happens to be one of the most beautiful. As you look at this church, just to the left of it is an amphitheater that overlooks the coast. Pastor Chuck gave, fittingly, a sermon on the Beatitudes, and it was one I was particularly looking forward to. I was standing at the top of the amphitheater and began to record Pastor Chuck's sermon.

There was about a 2-3-foot hedge right behind where I was standing, and I noticed there was someone crouched down behind the hedge. The person was one of the guides from our trip. The guides are Jewish, and few, if any, are believers. However, they do know the Bible. He was intently listening to what this man of God was talking about and what it meant to his heart.

In this lesson, we, in effect, are like the guide, getting to listen in on what is on the heart of the Son of God as He prays to His Father. The good and exciting news is this prayer includes you and me. John Knox, the great Scottish reformer of the 16th century called this chapter the "Holy of Holies in the Temple of Scripture."

Jesus always took time to pray. Why? If He's God, why does He need to pray? - Because He views prayer as the key mechanism of His relationship with His Father. This prayer is communication between a loving Father and an adoring Son. Remember what Jesus said about His prayer life with the Father in John 11:41b-42, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." Jesus knows the Father is listening because of the love they have for each other.

This is how we should view prayer – not as some legalistic, impersonal list of requests and demands. How is that communicating? Where's the love and regard for Jesus who gave up His life for you to build a relationship with God? Do you think you're unworthy? Guess what, we all are! Have you thought about why He was resurrected? – So He can have a relationship with you. He died so we may live. He lives, so we may love. What does the writer of Hebrews tell us in chapter 7, verse 25? "Therefore, he is

able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” What’s the key word in these two verses? Always. That’s a word that describes God’s commitment to prayer. May He give us the same commitment to Him.

Most of us know the “Lord’s prayer” – “Our Father, Who art’ in heaven....” This is really the model prayer Jesus gave us. In my opinion, John 17 is truly the Lord’s Prayer – in fact this is the longest prayer in the Bible. Note the framework to which Jesus prays to His Father:

- Jesus Prays to Be Glorified
- Jesus Prays for His Disciples
- Jesus Prays for All Believers

This framework is notable because it is the model to which we should pray. First – we deal with our relationship with the Father – acknowledging He is our heavenly Father, showing our love and adoration for Him – and then working out with Him what His plan is for how we are to glorify Him. Secondly, Jesus prayed for his best friends – His disciples. In effect, these were His Earthly family and closest friends. Once we’re right with the Father, our next step is to pray for those whom we are closest to – our family – our spouses, children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, and closest friends. Finally, Jesus prays for His church – those whom He is going to impact – even those not yet born.

We should pay close attention to this segment of His prayer – He’s praying for each of us. This segment, for us, is designed to teach us to pray for those God is going to bring into our lives – those to whom we will have an impact. We should always be praying for God to use us and bring people into our lives that need to know how much God loves them and how critical it is to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Chapter 17 is the final chapter of the Upper Room Discourse which began in Chapter 13. Jesus has been spending the last 4 chapters teaching His disciples new things – this is what John is referring to when he says in verse one “After Jesus said this”. The “hour has come” speaks to the single most important moment in history that Jesus has been referring to since He started mentioning it to His mother earlier in this gospel. The hour has come for Jesus to go to the cross, be sacrificed for our sins, and then be resurrected – the fulfillment of the promise of redemption.

In verse 2, Jesus makes a startling statement that He has authority over all flesh. There is a double-edged sword to this truth. On the positive side, if Jesus has power over our flesh, then He has the power to heal us. He proves that repeatedly throughout His ministry. Jesus having authority over our flesh also presents a potential struggle for us. For those who aren’t healed by Jesus, we can’t help but to ask “Why not me?” – right? The implication of this truth is crucial for us to understand. Jesus may allow the

flesh to be afflicted or suffer if it will bring glory to God, or, for unbelievers, if it will lead that person to salvation.

This may be hard to accept, but all you have to do is look to the cross. He allowed His flesh to be tortured and killed for the sake of giving us a permanent source of salvation. In other words, our spiritual health is more important to God than our physical health. This is not to say that God doesn't care about our suffering, but where it leads us is of utmost importance to Him. This truth is proven in the second half of the second verse when He says, "that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

Jesus continues to emphasize the issue of spiritual things – eternal life – in the third verse, and He very simply defines it – to know the only true God and Jesus Christ. Do you think of eternal life as something that exists only in heaven? Jesus refutes this notion right here. The moment we confess our faith in Him and receive the gift of salvation, we step into eternal life by growing in grace by studying His Word and getting to know God. Jesus said in verse 4, "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."

This statement is a bit curious because Jesus has yet to go to the cross. We need to remember God lives in the eternal, so He sees things as if they have already happened. The key word in this verse is "finishing". Every other religion, other than Christianity, is a works-based theology. In other words, their ability to go to heaven is tied to their efforts of being "good". The question that can't be answered with this type of theology is, "What amount of works is enough to get me to heaven?" They offer no answer. The right answer is there is no amount of works, or good behavior, that gets us to heaven. In other words, it's not what **we do** that gets us saved, it's what **He's done** that saves us.

For those who get hung up on the issue of worrying about what happens with future sinful behavior after accepting Christ, the forgiveness Christ offers by His finished work is for past, present, **AND** future sins. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:9, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." You can't be unsaved - He knows you're going to sin again after you accept Him as your Lord and Savior, we all do. But He's going to begin to ruin sin for you - that's the Holy Spirit working in you forming you into His image – it's going to take time though, and God knows that.

In the fifth verse, Jesus completes the first portion of His prayer by once again identifying Himself as part of the Trinity when He claims the glory He had with the Father before the world began. After praying for Himself and the Father, He then moves on to praying for His disciples. The first thing He says is in the sixth verse, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word." The Greek word for revealed is

“phaneroo” which means to “shine forth.” This means more like an illustration. In other words, Jesus is claiming He has been the illustration of who the Father is.

From 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul tells us that God was revealed in the flesh, and John 1:14 tells us that the “Word became flesh and dwelled among us”. In other words, Jesus is saying, “This is what I’ve done, Father – I have fleshed out, lived out Your Name and Your Nature before these men You’ve entrusted to Me. They have seen You by seeing Me.” In the NKJV, the opening words of this verse state, “I have manifested Your name”. For those of you who want to do an in-depth study of God’s character, a great way to accomplish this is to learn His names. Each name represents a component of His character, and when you bring them all together, you get an amazing portrait of our Creator. I promise He will reveal Himself powerfully if you do this. Kay Arthur’s book, “Lord I Want To Know You” is an exceptional study on the names of God. You can the paperback on Amazon for \$7 or on your Kindle for \$11.

In verse 9, the Lord makes an interesting statement in this prayer, “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.” He’s not praying for the world. Does that make sense? It should. He died for the world – what more can He do? No – He’s praying for the disciples – but what’s He praying for them? “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.” (verse 11b) He’s praying two important things for them: 1) to be protected; and, 2) that they be walking in unity.

We should take careful note of these two points – if Jesus believes He needs to pray for them, then they are obviously things we should pay attention to. Jesus is praying for protection and unity. What is the underlying concern that would drive someone to pray for these things? They’re going to be experiencing resistance. Jesus warned them of this in Luke 21:17, “Everyone will hate you because of me.” What are they protected with and what is the unifying force for them? The Holy Spirit. These guys are like the Keystone Cops before Pentecost, but look what they accomplished once they had the Holy Spirit and walked with Him? Brothers and sisters – what was true for these guys back then is true for us today. We are protected and united by the power of the Holy Spirit. Imagine what we could do if we all walked as the disciples did.

Jesus then offers another seemingly strange request in the fifteenth verse, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. Anyone here who would rather be with Jesus now than here in this world? The basis of Jesus’ request that they would not be taken out of the world is the same basis you and I are in this room at this very moment. We are to live our lives to glorify God. We cannot glorify Him to those who don’t know Him if we’re not here. So, the question we need to be asking ourselves is, “Am I glorifying God by how I am living in this world today?” Look at it another way, if we weren’t here on Earth, we wouldn’t be glorifying God on Earth– right? If we’re not glorifying God, then what are we doing here? Note that Jesus prays again for protection- this time specifically from the evil one. How did

He do this? What does Satan do? He deceives. By giving them the Holy Spirit – as Jesus called Him, the “Spirit of truth”, He protected them, and He protects us, from Satan’s deception.

He expands on this issue in verse 17 when He asks His Father to sanctify, or set them apart, by the truth. The truth is God’s Word. That means by us doing what we are doing here at People of the Word, we are being sanctified – or set apart – by the truth of God’s Word. Truth and Lies cannot coexist – they must be set apart. So, as followers of Jesus Christ – the Way, the Truth, and the Life – we are aligning ourselves with Him – the Word of God – the truth, and we are separating ourselves from the lies that pervade the world today.

Verse 20 should be a verse we all memorize because Jesus is telling us He is praying for us. Isn’t that amazing? Our Creator, Lord, and Savior is praying for us! So, what is on the Lord’s mind to pray for us? From verses 21-23, the very first thing is **unity** – “that all of them may be one.” Why is it so important that the body of Christ be united? It has an impact on the strength of our witness to an unbelieving world. If we accept the premise that each of us is born with a God-shaped hole in our soul that only He can fill, then that means every human being is looking for something that will offer what they’re looking for – something God-like. When an unbelieving world looks upon the church and sees it full of infighting, congregation splits, immorality, disobedience, etc., then what is the attraction of the church? However, if non-believers saw the church as a unified, sacrificial loving, and moral collection of people, they would see something different than what is in the world.

Non-believers would see what Jesus is describing when He talks about how He and the Father are one in verse 22. Most importantly from the 23rd verse, they would see that Jesus was sent by the Father, and the love the Father has for Him. Unity cannot exist without love. If we are not loving each other, we will never be united. We cannot love- the way God loves - unless we have Jesus. Therefore, for the body of Christ to exhibit something that loves like Jesus, it first has to decide to love Jesus. The final phrase of verse 23 should give us incredible joy – that God loves us just as He loves His only begotten Son. Don’t believe that? Look at the cross.

The last verse of this prayer sums up:

- ***What Jesus has done*** – make the Father known.
- ***What He will continue to do*** – make the Father known
- ***And Why He will continue to do it*** – in order that the love the Father has for Him may be in us and that Jesus Himself will be in us.

Let’s dwell on this incredible statement of purpose from our Lord for a moment. We have the love in us that the Father has for Jesus. Jesus Himself is in us. John 14:26 tells us, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” We have the

Holy Spirit in us. We have the fullness of the Godhead living within each of us. I don't know about you, but I have a hard time wrapping my arms around that – but it's true!

With the fullness of the Godhead, we should be loving each other differently. Pastor Jon Courson, speaking of the kind of love we have abiding in us, says "It's not that love is blind. It's that love sees *more*. And because love sees more, it is willing to see less." When we love like God, we will see the entirety of someone – the good and the bad – but we go on loving them because we see them as God does – someone worthy of letting His Son die for.

When we are trying to remember something, or we are trying make a point, one useful method is to repeat the thing to remember of the object of your point over and over and over. I've heard repeating something 3 or 4 times will help us make sure we remember or communicate the issue. What would you think if you heard something 37 times – would that cause you to think that someone is trying to get us to remember something or make a point? Well, that is exactly the number of times the Apostle John records Jesus making the point that He has been *sent* by the Father in the NIV version. He makes the point 6 times in this chapter alone. Clearly, this is a key issue for Jesus. And if it is important to Him, it should be important to us.

But why is it important to Jesus? Let's take a look at what we can learn from the word sent. First, if you are being sent somewhere, then that implies you're coming from somewhere else. Where was Jesus when He was sent to this world? He tells us in John 8:42, ""If God were your Father, you would love me, for *I have come here from God*. I have not come on my own; God sent me." Instead of the word "from" in terms of from God, the KJV uses the words "proceeded forth". The Greek translation includes comments like "come forth or depart out of" What's the point here? Jesus is claiming His role in the Godhead – the Trinity. Establishing Jesus as God is the key theme of this gospel, and the repeated statements of Jesus coming from the Father and being sent by Him is one of the primary methods of delivering this critical message. It is this message that all other belief systems should be measured against. If it does not clearly state that Jesus is God, it is an enemy of the Scriptures.

Secondly, if we are being sent somewhere, the sender has authority over us. Now with this statement, not only are we exploring the mere notion of Jesus' membership *to* the Trinity, but also, we are getting some insight into the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son *within* the Trinity. Let's look at a couple of statements from Jesus in this gospel:

John 5:19: Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

John 12:50b: So, whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

Do you hear the submission and the obedience in our Lord's words? How can this be if He is an equal member of the Trinity? Let me ask you a question, what is God's core character trait? - It's love. When you're totally in love with someone, your trust is unwavering. Whatever the object of your love asks you to do, you're more than willing to do it because of the love you have for him/her. Any of you remember your wedding vows? Remember the words "honor" or "obey"? Did you just say those words because the pastor told you to repeat them, or did you really mean them? Clearly, Jesus is willing to submit to the Father's authority because He loves and trusts the Father without any doubt. That, my brothers and sisters, is what He is looking for in our relationship with Him. To love Him and trust Him enough to obey Him.

Finally, if we are being sent somewhere, the Sender has a purpose for the one being sent. So, we've established that Jesus was sent from the Father as a member of the Trinity, and He is submitting to the Father's authority. The third part of this being sent is the idea that there is a purpose for being sent. The Sender has a plan, and the one being sent is charged with carrying out the plan. So, what was the Father's purpose of sending Jesus?

- "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28
- "to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:10
- "he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21b
- "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them [the Law or Prophets]" Matthew 5:17b
- "the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth." John 18:37b

Like I said earlier, when you keep hearing a word or phrase being repeated over and over, it is something that Jesus is serious about. In this chapter alone, He refers to the "world" 19 times. What does He mean by the world? Carol aptly defines the 'world' as, "The system of things you and I used to belong to before we were saved. A world that is dangerous and defiled seeking to ensnare the believer with every kind of temptation." From John 16:33, Jesus offers us true hope, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Just one more thing to give Jesus all the praise and glory.

In Carol's previous lecture on this lesson, she proposed that each of us should privately ask ourselves the following questions:

- What is my attitude toward the world?
- Am I being deceived by worldly attitudes that rob me of the joy and reality of Christ in my daily living?
- Am I putting myself into a place of danger that could ruin my testimony, my work, my home?
- Am I secretly being defiled by the world?

- Am I creating unbiblical divisions instead of encouraging spiritual unity?

Ok – so Jesus mentions that He was sent and His concern for the world a bunch of times - what does it have to do with me? – Everything! Notice the action words in Jesus' purpose for being sent – they include serve, seek, fulfil, give, save, and testify. Jesus came from the Father and was obedient to Him out of His love for Him. He set the model for us to follow – that's always the way it is with Jesus – He never asks us to do anything He hasn't already done.

So, what is He asking us to do? From John 20:21, He tells us, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And where is He sending us? Into the world. And we need to be heavily prepared to do this. Why? Remember what Jesus said in Luke 8:13, "Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away." The world is where Satan rules, and He wants nothing more than to bring us down and see us fall away. So, we need to be prepared as Jesus sends us out – to be armed with the Word of God – the Sword of the Spirit.

We're at war, everyone. Eternal lives are at stake. He wants to send each and every one of us – are you ready? Be of courage. Do not fear. He is with us. He will never forsake us. He is praying for us. Hallelujah! Let's pray.