

Jesus' Prayer for His Church

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. 6 "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Introduction

1. Before the final conflict of the cross is engaged, one final ministry remains for Jesus: the vital work of prayer. First for Himself (17:1-5); secondly, for His original band of followers (17:6-19); and lastly for all those who would believe in Him through their word (17:20-26).

2. Prayer is the language of desire. Our prayers reveal what is truly most near and dear to us. If you want to know the deepest longings and desires of a person's heart, all you need to do is transcribe their prayers.

3. If the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17) is the Temple of the New Testament, then Jesus' prayer here must be the Holies of holies. John Knox loved this prayer so much that he had it read to him every day of his last, extended sickness before his death.

4. Philip Melancthon, a disciple of Martin Luther declares: "There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God himself."

5. In this prayer, we eavesdrop on Jesus and are given one of the most profound revelations of His heart. What do we learn? We learn what Jesus desires for His church. This prayer crystallizes Jesus' main priorities for us.

6. What we will see in this text is that the life to which faith in Jesus Christ issues is one of worship, love, mission, and grace. Jesus desires that we become...

I. A worshipping community where life is centered on knowing God intimately (vv. 1-8).

A. Text: John 17:3, Jesus teaches that eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. Eternal life is a gift we receive through faith in Jesus. It is not just some future gift we receive after we die, but it is the present reality for a believer.

B. Yet, we tend to look for life in other things and people. When our idolatrous hearts look for satisfaction and significance in other good things besides the one, true God and His son Jesus Christ, we fall into what the Bible calls idolatry. See Jeremiah 2:13 and Romans 1:25 for a quick refresher course on the essence of idolatry.

C. We never worship God with sufficient zeal until we realize how indebted we are to His mercy. John 17:1-5 highlights all that Jesus is for us and just how indebted we are to the Lord's mercy.

1. His Passion: **The suffering Savior** who readies Himself for His passion...His "hour" (1).
2. His Position: **The exalted King** whom the Father has given universal dominion, "authority over all flesh." (2a).
3. His Power: **The life-giving Lord** who has the power "to give eternal life" (2b-3).
4. His Purpose: **The beloved Son** whose purpose is "to glorify the Father" (4). To glorify means to make the Father known.
5. His Preexistence: **The preexistent God** who shared God's glory before the world existed (5).

D. Means: The means that Jesus gives us for knowing God. In His prayer, He articulates two things: The Father's name (vv. 6,11,12,26) and the Father's words (vv. 6, 8, 14, 17).

E. Jesus teaches that knowing God should have a transforming effect on our lives. He uses the word "sanctify" (v. 17). This means to be progressively set apart for God and His purposes and to become more and more conformed to the likeness of His Son.

II. A unified community where love rules every relationship (vv. 9-17).

A. Text: "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:11, also see vv.21,23).

B. Basis: This unity that we enjoy in the body of Christ is modeled on the unity that exists within the Godhead. We share a common life of love that exists between the Father and the Son. We also share the revealed truth of God's Word. Therefore, our unity is never to be at the expense of truth.

C. Threats: Jesus highlights two threats to this unity (the hostility of the world (v. 14) and the hatred of the Evil One (v.15). If love is to rule all of our relationships, it is important to answer what it is. Love is the sacrificial commitment of the will to serve the interests and needs of another in spite of your changing moods and circumstances. This is the type of love that the Lord has for us. In fact, Jesus says that the love with which the Father loves Him will be in us (v.26). This is the secret to loving others well.

D. Honestly assess yourself: What tends to rule your relationships? How easy it is for us to allow pride and envy to rule (See Galatians 5:26 for how this happens). These vices always lead to division and rivalry in any community (church, family, or business).

III. A missional community where we live as sent ones (vv. 18-19)

A. The Text: "... as the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you into the world" (v.18).

B. Model: Our mission is modeled on Jesus's mission ("as the Father has sent me").

C. The Place: We are sent into the world ("into the world").

D. If Jesus desires that we become a community that lives missionally, we ought to candidly assess how we are endeavoring to make followers of Jesus by sharing the gospel by demonstration and declaration.

E. Would you ask the Lord to show you the broken places in our city and/or our world where He is stirring you to bring the gospel of grace?

IV. A gospel community where we are humbled under grace (4x)

A. The nature of this gospel grace is seen in a statement that Jesus repeats four times in his prayer.

1. Verse 2 "to give eternal life to all whom you have given him."
2. Verse 6 "to the people whom you gave me out of the world."
3. Verse 9 "praying for... those whom you have given me."
4. Verse 24 "I desire that they also, whom you have given me..."

B. This grace is amazing in its sovereignty. If you have come to place your faith in Jesus Christ, then it is evident that before time began you were given from the Father to the Son. This stupendous truth should humble us and cause us immense joy and gratitude.

C. Here is how Phillip Yancey describes this grace:

Amazing grace how sweet the sound...

"if I care to listen,

I hear a loud whisper from the gospel that

I did not get what I deserved.

I deserved punishment and got forgiveness.

I deserved wrath and got love.

I deserved debtor's prison

and go instead a clean credit history.

I deserved stern lectures

and crawl-on-your-knees repentance.

I got a banquet spread for me."

Discussion Questions

1. What do you learn in John 17:1-5 about our Lord that awakens your heart and mind to how personally indebted you are to His mercy?
2. On what or whom do you naturally tend to center your life other than the Lord? What are those things and people that you look to for satisfaction and significance in life? (Consult Jeremiah 2:13 and 9:23 to see what some of these false centers and idols can be. How would you live differently if you really believed that life is centered on knowing God intimately?

3. What do you think it looks like to live as a sent one? What did it look like for the original apostles?
4. If you resolved to live more of a missional lifestyle, what one thing would you do differently? How would you think differently? What one or two things might you do to become more missionally engaged?
5. What hinders you from living missionally?
6. Assess the quality of your relationships with others in the body of Christ. What do you think of John Milne's comment that: "The biggest barriers to effective evangelism according to the prayer of Jesus are not so much outdated methods, or inadequate presentations of the gospel, as realities like gossip, insensitivity, negative criticism, jealousy, backbiting, an unforgiving spirit, a root of bitterness, failure to appreciate others, self-preoccupation, greed, selfishness and every other form of lovelessness"?
7. Of the three priorities of worship—community, mission, and grace—which one needs the most attention in your life? Why?

Going Deeper

1. What do other corollary passages say about why is it so important to know God? Start by consulting Hosea 4:1-3; 6 and Daniel 11:32.
2. Go back and read John 17:1-5. There are only three explanations for everything you see and hear in Jesus' prayer: Insanity, blasphemy, or deity. Jesus is insane and out of his mind of which some accused Him. Jesus blasphemed and desired to die which the
3. C.T. Studd settled this question and said: "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me. Then, there is no sacrifice too great for me to make for Him." What one sacrifice is the Lord asking you to make for Him? A missional lifestyle always involves sacrifice.