

Jesus Prayed for Us

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John 17

It is a glorious and victorious Sunday morning. Children parades in with singing and we all said “Hosanna, *Yashouanna*, save us, Anointed One, save us, Jesus.” Just think about this event. The Prophet, the High Priest, the King is entering Jerusalem knowing all that he will face this week.

The hour has arrived.

For the last six months we have been studying the Gospel of John. And lately we have been studying Jesus’ teaching to his disciples in the upper room. The Prophet, the Priest, the King is going to pray for us.

Jesus prayed on different occasions. However, not all his prayers are recorded. In the Gospels we just have very few:

- the one when Jesus thanked his Father in Matthew 11:25-27
- and when feeding the five thousand in Matthew 14:13-21.
- we can also find a burst of praise at the tomb of Lazarus in John 11:41-42.
- perhaps the best known of Jesus’ prayers is the one he taught his disciples (Lord’s Prayer).
- the longest prayer is recorded in John 17 and is known as the *Farewell Prayer* or the *High Priestly Prayer*.

I will call it “a prayer for you and me, the followers of Jesus”:

“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.” (John 17:6 ESV)

Jesus said this prayer between **the Last Supper** and the **Garden of Gethsemane**.

let us divide the prayer to three sections:

1. Jesus prays for himself (1-8)
2. Jesus prays for his disciples (9-19)
3. Jesus prays for all believers (us) 20-26).

1. Jesus prays for himself (1-8)

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. ⁶ “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. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

The hour has arrived. We see this phrase coming again and again. In this section Jesus prays about his mission that he received from God the Father. He does not make a list of requirements; “there is no self-seeking here. We find but a single petition— **“Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you”**—repeated in these verses.

This section of the prayer finds Jesus talking to his Father about his efforts on **earth to glorify God** and to **be obedient to his will**.¹

For Jesus the cross is not a place of shame, but a place of honor. His oneness with the Father means that as he is glorified, so too is the Father glorified.²

In verses 1-9, eight times we read that God the Father is **giving** something to Jesus.

God has **given him authority** over the flesh;

God has **given him words**;

God has **given him a work** to do;

God has **given him the believers**. (God’s sovereignty, human responsibility to obey, see the light...)

God gave it all to Jesus;

Jesus received it and accomplished His Father’s will.

In verse 3, Jesus defines eternal life: **Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.** (John 17:3 NIV11)

Knowing God (*daat Elohim*), knowing Jesus Christ, which means to **have an intimate relationship** with God and the Son. **Eternal life is a relationship.**

-For some people Eternal life is something to experience after death.

Actually, it starts from the day you meet Jesus, on this earth, in this fallen world. It is a relationship.

-For some people Eternal life is believing in all right things (doctrines) or doing all the right things (good works) in life.

Doctrines and good works are part of our Christian faith; however, eternal life is a friendship with God, it is **abiding in Jesus**.

Illustration: I look back at a few people who have influenced me and changed my life. My relationship with them taught me the right beliefs and action. Of course I learned about doctrines, and moral codes; I learned His Word. Eternal life, as Jesus is stressing in his prayer, is a relationship.

The Father gave it to Jesus; Jesus gave it to us. We need to **receive** this message.

We cannot go out if we do not **receive**. Jesus received authority and a message.

We receive from Jesus the same thing. First receive and then be sent.

2. Jesus prays for his disciples (9-19)

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. 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. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

¹³ "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. (John 17:9-19 NIV11)

The key verse in this section is:

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. (John 17:18 NIV 11)

He prays that we will continue His work by sending us to the world. Jesus prays for three important topics:

a. Jesus prays for the disciples (and us today) to remain united.

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. 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. (John 17:11)

Remarkably he desires that his disciples enjoy an intimacy and oneness that are like to the intimacy and oneness he shares with the Father.

b. Jesus prays for the disciples' protection

Jesus is praying to **God to protect them (and us today)** from the world around us (17:11). He acknowledges that we are in the world, and the world will not welcome us:

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. (John 17:14 NIV11)

We are not **OF** the world; we are **IN** the world and we are **FOR** the world. we are FOR the world, **sent into it**, as Jesus was, to bear witness to God's love towards humanity.

We are in the world, not only as observers, or non-active individuals, but ***we are in the world, sent with a mission.*** (In Armenian disciple is called *arakyal*, someone with mission): **"I have sent them into the world."** (John 17:18 NIV)

Jesus has given them (the disciples and us) his word (17:14a), and the Spirit will recall it and keep it secure (14:26). This word, this divine revelation, will become essential equipment in their testimony and survival in the world.³

In order to do this, Jesus in his prayer indicates an important key:

c. Jesus prayed for the holiness of his followers

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17 NIV)

The verb **"sanctify"** comes from word **sacred, holy, to set apart**. Jesus 'set himself apart' so that we learn to 'set ourselves apart'.

Practically what does this mean?

I try to remind myself this every day. I make a deliberate decision **to set my mind on things that are from above.** (Colossians 3:2)

**Put on then, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, (Colossians 3:12 ESV)
bearing with one another and, ... forgiving each other; put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.
(Colossians 3:13-15 ESV)**

N.T. Wright explains:

What Jesus has already done for them is to ‘keep’ them in the father’s name (verse 12) and to give them his word (verse 14). In other words, when he now entrusts them to the father, this won’t mean sudden change, like mother entrusting her children to someone of whom they’ve never heard and whose house will be run on quite different lines to their own home. He has already taught them, so to speak, the table manners appropriate for the father’s house. In praying for the, now, he is simply praying that what he has begun, the father will gloriously complete.”⁴

Thus, if we are sent to a mission in this world, we need to know the message. We need to know the sender. And we need to be in a constant relationship with the triune God.

3. Jesus prays for all believers (us) (20-26).

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

²⁴ “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. ²⁵ “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” (John 17:20-26 NIV11)

Jesus will depart, his disciples will leave one day as well to be with him in his glory.

This will leave those whom they disciple, the church, to represent the kingdom in the world. Therefore Jesus now turns to pray for these followers whom he has not yet met, men and women who will follow the apostles, indeed the church today, which carries the mission set down by Jesus during his final week.⁵

Jesus is praying for unity in his followers. Jesus is praying that this group will be connected to each other not with a fake unity but a real unity. The example is the triune God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

He mentions Father and Son, and as we read chapters 14-16 the Spirit's the Advocate's role in facilitating this unity.

If the second part of his prayer was about believers' relationship with the world, this part is about the believers' relationship with each other.

that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:21 ESV)

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. (John 17:22-23 NIV11)

“that they may be one”: the model is the oneness of the Father and Son. The unity that Jesus is asking us to have is a testimony to the world to believe that God sent His Son Jesus to this world. Twice he said this in verse 21 and 23. **The world will know the true identity of Jesus through the unity of the community of the believers.**

Churches always will have differences between them. Just study church history. We will never worship God the same way. Churches are divided for different reasons. Sometimes they are divided over very serious theological issues, sometimes over individual interpretations, sometimes over worship music styles, or church leadership and politics...

Christian unity transcends all these differences.

Jesus ended this prayer with these words:

...I myself may be in them.” (John 17:26b NIV)

These are the last words Jesus prays before his arrest: “that I may be in them.” His last desire is to love his followers and indwell them.

This is the prayer of the prophet, priest and the King.

My role as your pastor is to pray to God that we will continue to make HIS NAME known to the world. I will not compete with other churches. I will pray for unity. I will pray for unity and love in our church. I will pray for humility in our worship, so that we focus on Jesus and He will be the center of our worship. By our love they world will know who Jesus is.

We have received,

We have been sent,

We should be united in Christ's love.

Examine your life and see which area you need to bring to Jesus in humility to transform you...

Amen

1. Gary M. Bruce, *John, NIV Application Commentary* P461
2. *ibid* p 462
3. *ibid* p 466
4. NT Wright, *John for Everyone* p 78
5. Gary M. Bruce, *John, NIV Application Commentary* P468

"Two men were adrift in an open boat in the ocean, and it looked like the end. For days they had been drifting. Nobody had shown up, and they were dry, they were hungry, and the sun was beating down, and they knew the end had come.

One of the men knelt down in the boat and prayed: '**Oh Lord**, I've broken most of your commandments. I've been a hard drinker, but if my life is spared now, I'll promise you that I never will again . . .'

And about that time his companion tapped him on the shoulder and said, '**Wait a minute, Jack**. Don't go too far (in making promises). I think I hear a boat coming.'

How do you pray to God? What motivates you to pray? How did Jesus pray?