

“The Right Motive for Prayer”  
(Jesus’ Prayer for the Church, Part 1)  
(John 17:1)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Jesus is with His disciples in the Upper Room

Where He has been preparing them for His departure:

Yes, He was leaving,

And they would grieve,

But He would come to them again –

Not only personally

When He rose from the dead,

But spiritually with the help and in the Person of His Spirit

To guide them and give them power.

He would now continue His ministry in heaven,

But His completed work meant not only

That His Father would love them,

Not only that they would have a place in His home,

But also that they could come directly to the Father

And ask whatever they wanted in prayer

And He would give it to them in Jesus’ name.

The fact that Jesus was leaving would be to their advantage –

They would now be better able

To do the work He had called them to do:

In honoring Him and His Father

By taking His good news to others –

These are the same blessings

He has provided for us today,

That we might do the same.

#### B. Preview.

Having given them these assurances

To bring joy and comfort to their hearts

In the light of the loss they were about to experience,

Jesus now turns His attention to prayer.

Here we have the longest recorded prayer

That Jesus offered in the Bible.

Jesus, as our Great High Priest,

Was about to offer up His life,

That He might wash us of our sins,

And so He prays

That the work He was about to do

Would bring about that desired result.

Here is His prayer

That His church might be established.

There are at least three ways

We can benefit from this prayer:

1. First, there are things we can learn from it to help us in our own prayers.
2. Second, from this, we can get a sense of just how much Jesus loves us.
3. And third, we can know

That because Jesus has prayed for these things, the Father has heard Him,

And so if we have trusted Him, we have already received them.

The first five verses are so full,

That we're not going to be able

To get through all of them at one time,

So we'll look at verse 1 this morning,

Verses 2-3 tonight,

And verses 4-5 next Lord's Day.

This morning, we see several things in the first verse:

1. Jesus' directness in prayer.
2. His posture in prayer.
3. The direction of His prayer.
4. The Recipient of His prayer.
5. His request.
6. And His motive.

We read in verse 1, "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.'"

## II. Sermon.

### A. First, we see Jesus' directness in prayer.

Notice what's missing.

We haven't read the whole thing,

But one thing we'll never find in any of His prayers

Is any confession of sin:

Jesus never sinned –

He is perfect –

And so He never had to ask His Father for forgiveness –

He could always go directly to Him.

Sadly, that isn't the case with us,

And won't be as long as we live.

When we pray,

We need first to confess our sins,

Repent of them,

And in our hearts, renew our purpose to do what's right.

If we're not willing to turn away from the things

We're either doing or not doing that are against His will,

The Lord won't be willing to hear us.

Isaiah writes in 59:1-2, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear."

The Lord doesn't say He can't hear us,

But that He won't hear us:

When we pray, we must be willing  
 To confess and repent of our sins.

B. Second, we see His posture in prayer:

He lifted His eyes up to heaven.

Jesus always had a kind of boldness in prayer,  
 That came from the relationship He had with His Father –  
 He always did the things that pleased Him,  
 He knew that His Father loved Him,  
 And so He knew His Father was ready and willing to hear Him.

That isn't always the case with us.

And so when we pray –

Particularly when we're confessing our sins –

We would do well to begin with the posture of the tax collector

When he was praying at the Temple.

We read in Luke 18:10-14, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

This doesn't mean that we can never look up.

Once we've confessed our sins

And looked to the Lord for forgiveness and righteousness,

We can look up.

Consider Psalm 123:1-2, “To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes *look* to the LORD our God, until He is gracious to us.”

In Jesus –

Clothed in His perfection,

With Him as our Mediator –

We can look to the Father

As our hope,

As our source of mercy and grace,

For our help,

And He will hear

And give us everything we ask

Because of what Jesus has done.

C. Third, we see the direction of His prayer.

Why did Jesus look up?

Why should we look up?

Because that’s where our Lord is: in heaven.

Even when we bow our heads to confess our sins,

We’re not to be looking down –

At least in our hearts –

We are to be looking up

To the Lord for His mercy.

We are to address our prayers to God

Who is in heaven,

Where Jesus also is –

The One who takes His place

Between us and God,

The One who opens the door of access to His Father –

We are to look up for their help.

D. Fourth, we see the Recipient of His prayer.

Jesus prays to the Father, and so should we.

Remember last week,

Jesus told us that His Father loves us –

He loves us because of the work Jesus did.

We don't need to ask Jesus to ask the Father for us –

We can ask Him directly for what we need –

In the name of His Son,

And He will give it to us.

Jesus encourages us to ask

That our joy might be made full.

Whatever you need, go to the Father.

John Bunyan once wrote, "You can do more than pray, after you have prayed; but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed."

That is very good advice.

E. Fifth, we see His petition.

He says the hour has come –  
The hour of temptation,  
The hour when He would lay down His life,  
When He would be handed over to His enemies,  
When He would be rejected, condemned,  
And then nailed to the cross,  
The hour when the Father  
Would charge our sins to His account,  
And He would suffer and die in our place  
So that He might, in His great love,  
Save us from the punishment  
We so richly deserve.

Since that hour has come,  
Jesus prays that the Father might grant Him  
The strength to carry out this work.  
His request is, “Glorify Your Son” (v. 1).

The glory that Jesus was to receive from the Father,  
Could only be gained on this path the Father had set before Him –  
He must go to the cross,  
He must suffer,

He must die,  
If He is to atone for our sins,  
If He is to free us from death,  
If He is to crush Satan's power and kingdom.  
He asks for the power to do this.

He prays that after He has laid down His life,  
That the Father would raise Him up again,  
That He would take Him up into heaven,  
That He would clothe Him  
With that power and glory that was promised Him.

Jesus, being man,  
Was dependent on His Father,  
And so He prays and asks Him  
For His grace to do this.

F. And sixth, we see His motive.

This is perhaps the more important thing to see here:  
Why Jesus asks Him for this strength –  
He says, “that the Son may glorify You” (v. 1).  
Even though Jesus was asking things for Himself,  
His goal was to honor to His Father.

Through His sacrifice on the cross,

He would satisfy His Father's justice –  
So that the Father could be just and the Justifier  
Of those who trust in His Son (Rom. 3:26).

Through the cross,  
He would reveal His Father's mercy and grace,  
That He might justify the ungodly –  
Those who aren't perfect in themselves –  
Through His own perfect righteousness (4:5).

And through His cross  
His mercy and grace  
Would now be declared to the whole world  
So that men from every nation  
Might hear, and believe,  
And honor the only true God.

Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself"  
(John 12:32).

Jesus asked what He did  
So that He might honor His Father.

#### G. Application:

1. And so from this let's learn first: how we are to pray.
  - a. Before we ask the Father for any of His blessings,  
Let's first humble ourselves and ask His forgiveness.

Let's confess our sins,  
Repent of them all,  
And then look to Jesus again to cleanse us  
And to clothe us with His righteousness by faith.

If you're not a believer here this morning,  
This is where you must begin:  
Unless you turn from your sins,  
Trust in Jesus,  
And turn your life over to Him,  
You can't expect Him to hear you.

b. Having been cleansed and clothed

Let's then lift up our eyes to heaven  
And ask the Father for whatever we want  
In the name of His Son,  
And He will give it to us.

c. Let's ask Him for:

The strength,  
The ability,  
The gifts,  
The resources and opportunities,  
To glorify Him.

The Lord ultimately plans to reward us –

To give us glory –

For the things we do in His name,

And so He is very willing

To give us what we need to do this.

d. And finally, let's check our hearts

To make sure that we have the right motive:

That He might be glorified.

*This should be the only goal behind everything we do:*

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

If that's our reason for asking,

He will give us what we want.

2. Secondly, let's see again the love Jesus has for us.

Why did He ask the Father for the strength to glorify Him?

It was that He might glorify His Father

By saving those He has chosen –

That He might bring many sons and daughters to glory –

That He might save us

Because He and the Father love us

If we are trusting Him this morning.

3. Finally, remember that the Father

Already answered this prayer,  
And gave His Son this strength –  
Jesus has been to the cross –  
As the Table reminds us this morning –  
He has been raised –  
As this day of rest and worship reminds us –  
And He has ascended and been glorified –  
As the presence of His Spirit in our hearts continually reminds us.  
If you are trusting Him this morning  
This is what He has done for you.

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